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HAILE SELASSIE  
EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA





THE EMPEROR'S FAVOURITE PORTRAIT

[Frontispiece

# HAILE SELASSIE EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

WITH A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY OF ETHIOPIA,  
INCLUDING THE ORIGINS OF THE PRESENT  
STRUGGLE, AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE  
COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLES

*By*

THE PRINCESS ASFA YILMA

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

AZAJ WARQNEH C. MARTIN,

L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S.ED., L.F.P. AND S.GLAS.

*Envoy Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary  
of H.M. The Emperor of Ethiopia*

LONDON  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO., LTD.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS, LTD.  
PAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON

TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY MOTHER  
PRINCESS YUBDAR OF ETHIOPIA

---

‘Silver may be lost—A bright star never.’

*Ethiopian Saying*

*In the middle of the nineteenth century a British officer, J. T. Bell, penetrated Abyssinia, rose to high rank in the service of the Emperor Theodore, was made Prince by royal decree, and married a princess. The daughter of the marriage, the Princess Yubdar, fell in love with Theophilus Waldmeier, a Swiss explorer and missionary, a great friend of Bell and of the Emperor—who joyfully agreed to the marriage. For his bravery and skill Theo. Waldmeier was raised to royal rank and after Bell had perished while defending the Emperor, occupied a position of great trust. Having stood in danger of death during Theodore's madness, he was rescued by the expedition of General Napier. He then moved to Syria but was in constant touch with Menelek II. who valued him as an adviser. His daughter, Waisaro Asfa Yilma, who was educated in Europe and has travelled extensively, is peculiarly fitted to interpret Ethiopia to the western world. An accomplished linguist, she has inherited her father's fine instinct for scholarship, and this, her first book, reveals a strong personality and an able pen. The Princess is married to an English officer. She is, like her husband, an accomplished musician. At the present time she is giving valuable assistance to the Ethiopian cause, and from her close touch with the leading personalities among her countrymen can write with authority upon the present crisis.*



HIS EXCELLENCY, WARQNEH C. MARTIN

[Photo: Lafayette]





THE PRINCESS ASFA YILMA





*The Princess Asfa Yilma wishes to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the kindness of Mr. O. B. Naf, of Messrs. Waring & Gillow (who was in charge of the decoration of the Imperial palace) in permitting the inclusion of photographs taken by him during his stay in Ethiopia. She wishes also to thank Mr. Clifford Troke for the care and skill which he has devoted to the reading of the proofs.*

*The career of His Excellency Warqneh C. Martin, a long story of steadfast service to humanity, has abounded in strange adventures and must, when his duties permit him to write of it, prove one of the most interesting and romantic narratives of modern times. Found wandering amid the ruins of Fort Magdala after the British Expedition of 1868 had defeated King Theodore, he attracted the notice of an English officer who, learning the young boy's parents were apparently dead, adopted him, won by the alert intelligence of the youngster's eyes. The officer took the boy to India where he profited to such an extent from the European education he received that he eventually came to England and obtained high medical qualifications. Following a period of distinguished service in Burmah he retired, and on the death of his wife, an English lady, he returned to Ethiopia, married a princess of the Royal House, and served the Emperor Menelek as private physician. As medical officer to the British expeditions, he had already campaigned against the "Mad Mullah" in Somaliland. All his life this remarkable man has lived close to danger and now he has entered upon a diplomatic career, having been entrusted with duties of peculiar delicacy and difficulty. He has had a hand in all the progress made by Ethiopia of late and is particularly identified with the League of Young Patriots pledged to serve their country without thought of gain. His two sons, whose training as engineers has been interrupted by the war, are both competent airmen and recently left for Ethiopia to serve under the Emperor.*

## INTRODUCTION

BY

AZAJ WARQNEH C. MARTIN

*Envoy Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary  
of H.M. The Emperor of Ethiopia*

It is strange to reflect that less than a year ago so far as the western nations were concerned only a few travellers and government experts knew anything about my country and that now there is focused upon her the gaze of the whole world.

Yet Ethiopia, an ancient empire, was civilised and powerful when many of the Great Powers of to-day were in their infancy. In those times the Ethiopians built their own ships and explored the oceans of the East, trading and even founding settlements, a vigorous and enlightened race.

This people welcomed Christianity in the fourth century, and later, when Christian Rome appealed to them for help, marched bravely to the defence of their fellow Christians in Arabia; and for many hundred years their might and magnificence were a legend in the western world.

What then, you will ask, is the reason for the decline of my country's fortunes?

The answer is surely to be found in one of the strangest accidents in history—the sudden and dazzling rise of Islam, which in a single century made conquests so vast that the mountains of Ethiopia became an isolated stronghold of the Christian faith cut off with tragic completeness from all contact with western progress.

For more than a thousand years within that stronghold time stood still. The people of Ethiopia, their entire energies devoted to desperate self-defence, neglected the peaceful arts in which they had once excelled. Life for them was a grim struggle against implacable foes who ringed them round. That they did not go under was a

great triumph, that they preserved intact the inner core of their past civilisation a greater triumph still; but that they became suspicious of foreigners was an inevitable result of the cruel trick which history had played upon them in making the word foreigner for so many centuries synonymous with foe.

Happily this is no longer true. To-day in her struggle with Italy, Ethiopia has, I know, the sympathy of ninety per cent of the world. Not a day passes without my receiving proof upon proof of the good will which exists towards my country. And with this sympathetic interest comes a persistent demand for information. The whole world is seeking to learn the truth about Ethiopia and about our gallant Emperor who is facing with such calm wisdom this crisis in the history of our nation.

Thus I am glad to find that a book has been written which is more than mere gossip and which puts in proper perspective the life and work of the Emperor Haile Selassie, showing with considerable detail yet without losing sight of main outlines the origins and significance of the present struggle. While the extreme pressure of work to which I have been subjected has prevented me from giving to these pages the close and critical attention which in more leisured times I should have wished to have bestowed upon them, I have found the book at every point a mine of valuable and interesting—and frequently exciting—information. No pains have been spared to ensure accuracy, and while some of the events described are so recent that it is perhaps impossible for the whole story yet to be known, there is no volume of which I am aware in which so complete, so truthful, and so balanced an account of my country and her ruler can be found.

I heartily recommend this book to those who are desirous of getting at the truth and congratulate the brilliant authoress upon her fine and distinguished piece of work.

*Imperial Legation of Ethiopia, London.*

*November 17th, 1935*

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# HAILE SELASSIE

## EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

### CHAPTER I

#### AN EMPEROR AT BAY

IN the heart of his mountain kingdom Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, Negus Negusti—"King of Kings," is rallying his subjects against the invader. He has the sympathy of almost all the onlooking nations, but has received little if any practical help. At any moment now vast fleets of bombing warplanes may pour destruction upon his capital. Meanwhile he prays constantly, studies maps and dispatches, issues carefully conceived orders to his troops, and to the outer world sends proclamations remarkable for their dignity and moderation.

In Rome the towering figure of Benito Mussolini, the limelight of the world upon him, presents a strange contrast to the mild, scholarly figure whose country he has sworn to seize; but time will show which of these two men is the stronger.

Haile Selassie is short in stature and slight in build. His voice is soft, his hands are delicate as an artist's. Throughout his life his greatest happiness has been found in his well-stored library. There is nothing of the warlord in his character, and his own voluminous writings show the detachment of a philosopher rather than the acute practicality of a man of affairs.

Yet none can deny that he has proved a successful ruler. Surrounded by difficulties and dangers which can hardly be estimated by the European mind he has kept firm control of his people, and in the face of much

unreasoning prejudice has worked hard for the betterment of his land. Now that he has been attacked by a great European power his greatest fear is that, even if his country emerges in safety from the conflict, civilising influences will have been so weakened that his life's work will have to be begun again.

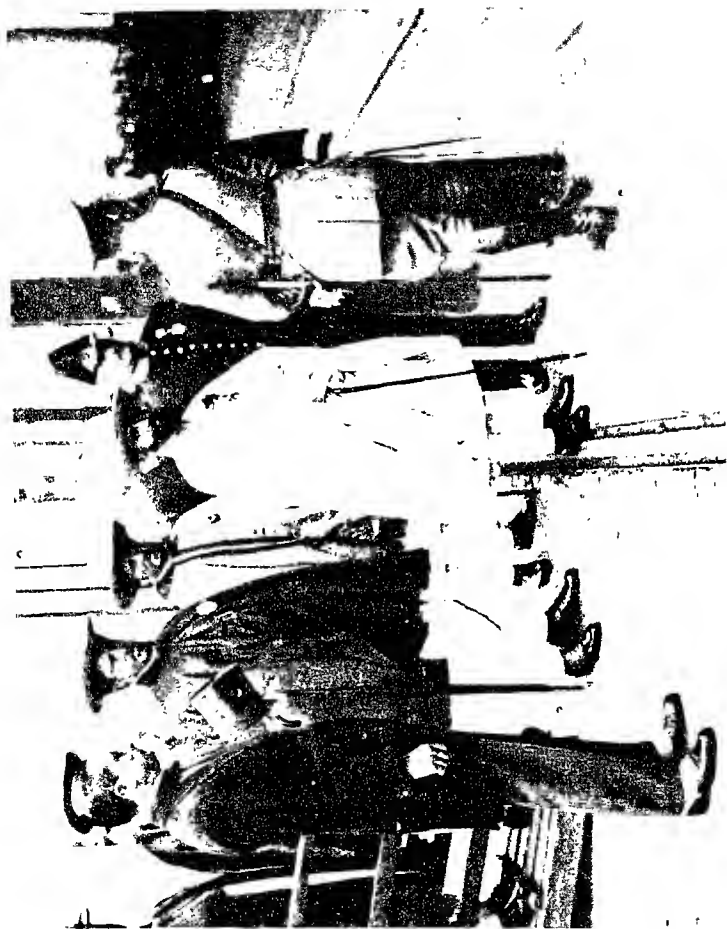
The story of his life, which I have set out to tell, will come as a surprise, I think, to those who have smiled sympathetically at that quiet, frail personality revealed by the cinematograph. Conspiracy, revolt, poison, and sudden death—all these are to be found in that story. Espionage and diplomatic intrigue run without a break throughout the tale. That the Emperor Haile Selassie has braved these dangers, has outwitted plotters, outmanœuvred subtle diplomats, brought western ideas to his people despite a powerful priesthood's continuous opposition, proves that he possesses unusual qualities; and when it is remembered that he has survived without recourse either to cruelty or to treachery of any kind, who can deny the splendid nature of his achievements? Yet Europe and America show little understanding of what manner of man this is and what he has done. Alone, unaided, maligned, yet proud, able and determined he stands at bay.

One evening several months ago the Emperor's personal envoy, who was my guest, after delivering the several messages entrusted to him, produced from his despatch case a mass of press cuttings which he spread before me with a puzzled smile. We both felt keenly the strangeness of the situation. For years our country had been little more than a name to Europeans, but now, with the threat of war in the air, it was discussed on every side. Column upon column of print described the geography of Abyssinia, the customs of its peoples, the secrets of its unexplored territories. A few of the stranger statements my friend had blue pencilled, but most of the confusions of fact he was content to dismiss with a shrug of his



"SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY. . ."

The Emperor and Empress wearing the Ceremonial Head-dress of the Royal House of Ethiopia of which the design goes back to the days of Solomon and Sheba



THE EMPEROR SETS FOOT ON ENGLISH SOIL, HIS TALL CHIEFAINS,  
BLACK AS EBONY, ACCOMPANYING HIM. (1924)

shoulders. To sift out the truth from this mass of contradictions and half truths was clearly a hopeless task.

"You should see my room," he said. "The printing presses of the world are turning out books by the score. It is part of my duty to keep an eye on them."

I said that I did not envy him his task.

"That is a pity," he answered, "for I was about to ask you to share it."

We both laughed.

"You see," he continued, "there are so many statements now being made about Ethiopia which are quite untrue and ought to be contradicted. But we have no big staff to deal with them. Often a month goes by before we can issue a denial. And the harm is done by then. I hope you will help me. The Emperor will be very grateful."

And then he began to tell me of some of the things which were being written. One writer he mentioned wrote of Abyssinia as though her barbarism were a menace to the hearths and homes of Europe. We were all a race of savages who if not stamped out at once by a beneficent Italy would overrun all Africa and then imperil western civilisation. This was not stated in so many words—but the general trend was clear. Never, I thought, had so much falsehood been packed into so small a compass.

"Who was it," asked my friend, "who remarked that when war breaks out truth is the first casualty?"

"War?" I questioned—"we are not yet at war?"

"Make no mistake," he answered, "the war has already begun. The rains are preventing actual fighting but the Italian campaign is well on its way."

"They think in England that Mussolini is bluffing."

He nodded. "I know," he said. "England disapproves of the war and cannot imagine Italy flouting that disapproval. But you will see."

"War . . . and the Emperor has no guns. . . ."

"And Britain and the League forbid us to obtain them. . . ."

"What does the Emperor say?"

"He has no illusions. He knows what lies ahead."

"Danger . . . terrible danger."

"Well, he is used to that."

I pictured that slight, alert figure standing on the steps of his palace gazing at the great hills beyond which lay the menace of extinction. He was alone, terribly alone. Just a handful of trusted advisers understood the position. For most of his people war in the modern sense of the term was unknown and unimaginable. Yet if war came they would die in thousands fighting the monstrous devices of modern science with the weapons of the Middle Ages.

"What is the Emperor's plan?" I asked.

"He will make no move. He hopes that the League of Nations may act before it is too late. In any case he knows that only among the mountains can he hope to stem the Italian advance. His policy is to 'wait and see'."

"Are the chiefs willing?"

"Not all of them. Some favour attacking at once. But the Emperor has them well under control."

I looked at the portrait of the Emperor, his gift to me at our last meeting. It seemed strange to reflect that this kindly, courteous man whose gaze, direct yet sensitive, met my own, had brought strong and just control to a land of turbulent tribes, could hold in check his brave yet unthinking warriors, and could rally an oft divided nation against a common foe. How many people in England realised, I wondered, the qualities demanded of a man by such a task? There stood the Emperor, his whole life pledged to the tasks of peace, yet compelled to wage a ghastly and merciless war. One of the greatest tragedies in history might well be enacted in Ethiopia if world opinion could not intervene, a tragedy great not in its scope but in its depths of bitterness.

Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, an almost unknown monarch thrust suddenly into dangerous fame. . . . What was the secret of this remarkable man? Even in Ethiopia opinions were sharply divided concerning the reasons for his success. Some said that it was magic, others that it was luck; some that it was devilish cunning. A more considered answer might be that it was the triumph of a man of good intent who was nevertheless possessed of sufficient brains to fight rogues by their own methods.

As to his personal character some called him harsh to the point of sadism; others said that his continual bias towards mercy was a terrible weakness in a land where mercy was not understood. One author of considerable brilliance had pictured him as a crafty oriental using his superior learning to enrich himself at the expense of his unfortunate subjects. On the other hand a traveller of some distinction pictured the Emperor as an idealist made of stern stuff, who spent his personal fortune on schools and hospitals, who dreamed yet knew how to make dreams realities, who would yet astonish the world.

Where in this conflict of impressions lay the truth? As I looked at that portrait I determined to seek it both in my own mind and in the minds of others who knew the Emperor well. Before my friend the envoy left me I had promised to write a book. It was perhaps a rash undertaking and I did not altogether appreciate the immense labour involved. But while others were dying for Ethiopia the least I could do was to write.

Yet this book is no piece of propaganda. I have had a free hand. My only concern has been to get at the truth. Now that my task is almost completed and I am surveying the material which, with the help of many friends both in Europe and in Ethiopia, I have managed to gather, I feel that there are depths in my Emperor which I have failed to sound, that the riddle of his character has not been resolved in these pages. But if I have provided facts on which others may base their judgments I have perhaps done as much as I had any right to expect might be



accomplished by one more used to read than to write and who has never tackled a full length book before. But whatever are the shortcomings of this work of mine, and I do not doubt that they are many, one good effect has resulted from my task. I have learned to judge less harshly the writings of others.

I have learned something else as well . . . that to sit writing, always writing, with the knowledge that even as you write men and women of your own kindred are being savagely slaughtered and that there is nothing you can do to aid them, is a deadly business. It is no use trying to comfort yourself by saying that the pen is mightier than the sword. You have the certain knowledge that though that may be true of some pens, the chances are that it isn't true of yours. But you can't help clinging to the hope that your work may do some good, that a few readers here and there may be reached by your struggles to get such truth as is available down on to paper, and that here and there a lie may be countered before its poison has had time to spread. And it is this hope, not altogether illusory I trust, that has held me to my task.

There is also the memory of brave young Ethiopians whom I have seen set out for their country ready with laughing willingness to give their lives.

"We will fight, Waisaro, you shall see how we will fight," said one young officer who came to say good-bye. "If they win it will be because there is not one man of us left to go on fighting."

"They must not win," I said. "They must not."

He smiled.

"Wait till we get them in the hills."

He kissed my hand, saluted, and was gone. A scholar and a gentleman, a man who though young was trusted by his Emperor, who had hoped to do great things for Ethiopia in the peaceful development of the land. He had gone to die beside his Emperor—in a vile, useless and criminal war.

I thought of young Italians going out to die. . . .  
“Wait till we get them in the hills. . . .” It all seemed  
so horrible, so insane. I prayed that Great Britain,  
whose love of justice is known to all the world, might step  
in and forbid the slaughter.

But it seems that her hands are tied, that her authority  
is weakened. In the heart of his mountain kingdom,  
alone, unaided, a Christian Emperor of the East, his  
godless foes upon him, stands bravely at bay.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EMPEROR'S SECRET

HAILE SELASSIE rules because he knows the true foundation of a ruler's strength. If ever there was a man who realised that knowledge is power he is that man. Desire for knowledge is the mainspring of his character. In saying this I speak from personal experience.

When he was in England in 1924 he received me in private when the diplomatic functions were over and quietly and shrewdly questioned me concerning everything in London which he had found difficult to understand. As I answered his questions I had a feeling that each fact was quietly seized upon and stored away for use at some future time. Nothing escaped him. His penetrating enquiries concerning the political situation would, I remember thinking, have astounded the various functionaries who had treated him with somewhat superior politeness and answered him with official caution, amounting usually to evasiveness. He was in Europe for many reasons, but above all to learn.

The reception had at first a certain formality, for an Ethiopian of whatever rank or kinship when meeting his ruler after an absence must first make respectful renewal of allegiance; but we were soon gossiping easily concerning the past.

At this time, it must be remembered, the Emperor was only Regent, ruling with the Empress Zawditu, and bearing the name Ras Tafari. However, as representative of the throne, he was accorded full regal dignities.

"You knew my father, did you not?" asked the Emperor.

I said that I had met Ras Makonnen, Governor of Harar, only on one occasion, but that I had always

remembered his strength and charm. The Emperor smiled. "They thought well of him in London I am told?"

It was a happiness to reply with truth that during my years in England I had several times heard from officials concerned with Ethiopian affairs how greatly the character and ability of the Emperor's father had been respected.

As I spoke he said nothing, but I saw a look of resolution come into his eyes, determination that he would be worthy of his father.

He picked up a volume from the table at his side.

"Will you tell your cousin when next you see him that I value his dictionary," he said. "It is a fine piece of work and the greatest assistance to us all."

He was referring to my cousin, Charles Ambruster, British Consul at Gondar in Northern Abyssinia who, having retired to Majorca, had compiled an Amharic dictionary, the first attempt at an exhaustive guide to that elusive language. I was glad to be able to assure him that my cousin was well.

"There is still a monument to your father in Ethiopia," said the Emperor, smiling. At first I did not understand. "The cannon which he cast for the Emperor Theodore. You know the story?"

I had heard my father tell it many times.

"I believe it was never fired?"

The Emperor's smile grew wider.

"No, it was never fired, Princess, but for a man who knew nothing of such things it was a wonderful achievement. We have yet to make another. That was sixty years ago and we have still no factories."

"You have seen factories in England, your Highness?"

"No, not yet."

"One part of England where there are many of them they call the Black Country."

The ruler from the East was puzzled.

"The smoke blackens everything. It hides the sky. Factories can be very terrible."

The Emperor slowly nodded.

"We shall not go too fast," he said.

Seated in a high-backed chair, a pile of books and newspapers beside him, he talked alternately in French and Amharic, touching on many subjects. He did not pose. It was his air of simplicity that charmed me. London had excited him; he did not attempt to conceal it. That morning he had spent in a famous Knightsbridge store. "One day," he said, "they shall open a branch in my capital." He smiled as he spoke. "Wait," he said, "I will show you what I have bought and how much they charged me. Then you shall tell me if I have done well."

Having spoken he raised his hands and clapped three times. At once a servant emerged from behind a curtain—and I realised even in London he had maintained the rules of his palace and always had assistance close at hand. The various lists were brought and I glanced through them. He had spent over one thousand pounds, buying with excellent judgment and with little of that love of the ornate and curious which eastern potentates so often display. I was able to tell him that the prices were reasonable, and he nodded agreement. "Yes," he said, "they do not cheat you in trade, the English. I like London. Everything here is so . . ." he paused in search of a word. "So firm," he said at last. "Everything here is so firm."

Almost at once he began to speak of labour troubles, of Socialism. Was there any chance of this, he asked? Would it do harm? He spoke without prejudice and as one well acquainted with Socialist theory though very sceptical as to its practical application. I answered as well as I was able, with an uneasy feeling that concerning such matters he probably knew much more than I did. He saw that I was not likely to give useful answers and at once sought another topic.

He had been charmed by the Prince of Wales. One day that young man would rule a vast Empire. Would he be friendly to Ethiopia?

I gave what assurance I felt able, wondering inwardly at that strange gift which had enabled the Prince of Wales to find in a brief interview and without the least effort a friendly footing with an Ethiopian Emperor.

"I hope that he will visit me at Addis Ababa," said the Emperor. "I will find good hunting for him. He shall see how our men can shoot and ride. . . . And you must come too, Princess. You have stayed away too long. . . ." He looked at me reflectively. "Don't you find your husband very white?" he asked.

It was a gentle, friendly question, and the Emperor smiled as he spoke; but I sensed the hint of reproof in the tone and felt the intense pride of race that was summed up in those simple words.

The Emperor renewed his invitation with the utmost cordiality. Then all at once he frowned. "Your husband was a soldier. They tell me he has fought in the East?" I said that this was so. "You must bring him out to me," he said. "Our neighbours are becoming too . . . friendly. I fear we shall have trouble soon."

The grave tone was prophetic. Then the Emperor was smiling again, telling me that the Empress wished very much to see me, that she had sent me her portrait, that she hoped my family were blessed by God's mercy, that she would remember me in her prayers.

I met him several times in the course of his stay, the last occasion being just prior to his departure. Surrounded by his suite, for twenty rulers of provinces had accompanied him on his travels, he still remained a figure of scholarly dignity, though some of the chieftains, splendid figures and black as ebony, towered almost threateningly above him. As we exchanged brief but heart-felt farewells I felt a strange uneasiness. It is a legend in my family that the blood of the Queen of Sheba which flows in our veins gives to the womenfolk the power to foresee evil. Having lived so long in Europe I had almost forgotten the old beliefs; but at that moment I suddenly felt with appalling keenness that evil and danger were

close at hand. I wanted to warn the Emperor that there was treachery somewhere near.

But western civilisation had taught me that such things were ridiculous and in any case the Emperor had by this time moved away. So the warning was never uttered. As I looked at the group of retreating figures, however, I caught a glimpse of one of the chiefs and there was a look on his face which filled me with fear. It was just a momentary impression, nothing more, but I turned at once to an Ethiopian merchant who stood beside me and whom I knew I could trust. "Who is that man?" I asked.

"Ras Hailu," he said, "the richest man in Ethiopia."

"I don't like the look of him."

My friend smiled.

"It's all right," he said, "don't worry. The Regent is no fool."

We had no time to say more for social duties parted us. But there was a sequel to that chance conversation. Some years later I was to receive a letter from my friend in which he was to remind me of my premonition. That letter told me in great detail the story of a strange conspiracy against the Emperor in which Ras Hailu had played the leading part. That story I have told in its proper place. I mention it here as an indication of the secret hostilities by which the Emperor has all his life been surrounded. During the last two years signs had not been lacking that so far as internal dissensions were concerned he was at last out of danger. It will be ironic in the extreme if just as his slow and painstaking plans for the betterment of Ethiopia seem likely to make rapid progress the clock is set back through the barbarous attack of a reputed civilised power.

It is perhaps the cream of this evil jest of fate that the Emperor Haile Selassie has an almost exaggerated respect for the institutions of civilised Europe, and that while those who know little of his country complain that reforms are tardy, there are many European residents

of long residence in Addis Ababa who think that he is being dangerously swift in his imitation of western ideas.

I can still see him seated in that high-backed chair, his white cloak thrown around him, his tight white trousers looking strange though very neat above his patent leather shoes, and questioning, always questioning.

One of his questions I particularly remember. He wanted to know what were the duties of the English aristocracy. "What were their duties to their king? I found the question very hard to answer and finally said that though most of them had no definite duties in the sense of tasks which must be performed under pain of punishment—here the Emperor smiled—that many of them, far more, in fact, than most people realised, undertook voluntary services to the State without reward of any kind.

He nodded. "So I have heard," he said. "Perhaps it is in that fact that the secret of Britain's greatness lies. If I could find men among my chieftains who would serve their country without thought of reward—not on the field of battle, we have brave warriors in plenty—but in civil life. . . ." He was silent for a while. Then he said: "We must get the young men, we must train them in the path of service. The young men are our hope—if only we can set them on the right road."

To-day there is in existence a League of Young Patriots who are pledged to service without reward. But the fact that they are growing up in an atmosphere poisoned by the aggression of a European power is a tragedy. Their minds are crippled by an instinctive and all-absorbing antagonism towards their country's enemies, and much of the sincere emotion which might have been harnessed for their country's good has flowed into the useless channels of hatred. Ethiopia is not the only country where patriotism which might express itself in positive good has turned instead to sterile anger at the sight of the predatory advance of civilisation.



On another occasion I was present while the Emperor told an amusing story which showed the difficulties of bringing enlightenment to his land. In the old days crime was smelt out by professional soothsayers who claimed the occult power of seeking out thieves and murderers and tracing stolen goods. The feats which these men performed while in a state resembling a trance were amazing, and it is for the psychologists to explain them, but the Emperor had gradually come to the opinion that this once honourable calling had fallen into decadence. Wrong accusations were being made in return for bribes, and so great was the confidence of the people in the verdicts of these diviners that there were many grave miscarriages of justice.

So the Emperor, struggling to start a police system on sound European lines—I had not the heart to interject that it had yet to be shown if the European lines are indeed sound—forbade the consultation of these diviners. If there was theft the aggrieved person was to apply to the police. The new decree came into force and for a while it seemed that all was well. Then one day there was a law suit, a well-known diviner claiming that the head of police in a certain district who had been making use of him for some time had failed to pay the stipulated retainer!

But in spite of heart-breaking disappointments on every hand the Emperor continues to work on. Only those who know nothing of him describe him as weak or timid. It would have been so easy for him to have amassed a fortune abroad and slipped away to enjoy it in peace. It need not have been done so as to give the impression of deliberate desertion—a palace revolution, the deposed monarch exiled . . . it would all have appeared so natural. Then, with ample means, he could have devoted himself to the books which are his chief love. It would have been easy, too, for a weak-minded man in the Emperor's place to make excuses for such conduct, that he had done his best and failed, that his

people were ungrateful. But though Haile Selassie is a man of peace no one doubts who knows him that he will fight to the last.

With regard to his tour of Europe he has sometimes been criticised for extravagant spending, though compared to some eastern rulers who have visited the western world he was studiously moderate in his purchases. Everything he bought had a purpose. He knew that at the stage of development which his countrymen had reached display was a necessary part of any attempt to rule them. Moreover, the best way to spread the new gospel of cleanliness and health was to build a palace and fit it up spotlessly on modern lines. Slowly the example would spread. Chiefs who cared nothing for hygienic principles might well be persuaded to adopt them from slavish devotion to royal fashion—which weakness is not a monopoly of Europe—and so a generation might be bred to whom sanitation was no novelty. Those who know how the Emperor has poured out his own money in the fitting up of hospitals laugh when they hear him spoken of as proud and mercenary.

Yet proud he certainly is, and he openly expressed his opinion to members of his entourage that his reception in Great Britain was not so royal as he would have wished. This applied only to the first days. Later when he had made an excellent impression he had no cause to complain of lack of hospitality; but in the first stages of his welcome he detected a lack of warmth. He questioned me closely as to this. The Duke of York had met him on his arrival. He was the King's second son. Did that imply a slight? Was the State landau in which he had been driven through London the same as that in which a European monarch would have been conducted, and were his quarters—he was lodged in a house in Kensington, the property of Mrs. Sassoon—suitable to his rank?

Questions such as these might well have been interpreted as indicating an overweening vanity—yet few conjectures could have been so far from the truth. To

understand the Emperor's feelings (he was, of course, in those days only Regent) you must remember that he knew little of Europe and further that it was of the utmost importance to him from the point of view of policy that he should be treated with deference. There were jealous eyes watching him, not only at home but in his own suite, who could judge human worth only in terms of the respect shown to it by foreigners and who could estimate respect only in terms of ceremonial etiquette. It was thus not personal vanity which prompted the questionings but shrewd considerations of policy. As a man the Emperor cared nothing for the social shams of either East or West. His keen mind pierced through them and showed them to him for what they were—he had not read the great French satirists for nothing; but as a statesman he was compelled to estimate to a nicety the possible effect on his followers of any slight either real or imagined. Such calculations are part of the art of ruling to a monarch placed in his position and personal vanity does not enter into them in any but the least degree. When one considers the absurdities of which Europeans with social aspirations are capable with very much less than a throne at stake it is possible to see the attitude of the Emperor in proper proportion and to acquit him of the charge of undue self-esteem unless there is evidence of a far more personal nature to confirm the accusation.

And such evidence is lacking. Possibly you have read that when the Emperor goes out shooting the official who accompanies him always shoots first and misses while the Emperor then brings off the winning shot. This sort of anecdote though true enough in uninterpreted fact gives a very wrong impression. To begin with a second shot is often a good deal more difficult than a first—and Haile Selassie is admitted by all who know him to be a very fine shot indeed; while it is incorrect that the ceremonial—a very ancient prescription—is carried out whenever the Emperor shoots. A young Frenchman of my acquaintance, an almost miraculous shot, told me

how some years ago he had the pleasure of a few hours' informal shooting with the Emperor whom he paid the compliment of treating simply as a fellow sportsman and beating at the game—though by a very small margin. "When it was all over," he said, "I watched for signs of sulkiness, or alternatively that glassy politeness which is even more indicative of the bad loser with whom the fault is inborn. I will swear that I saw no such sign. The Emperor was genuinely glad to have found an antagonist willing to meet him on equal terms and being beaten in a fair trial of skill perturbed him not in the least."

To me that story outweighs all evidence to the contrary.

This, then, is Haile Selassie as he appeared to European eyes when, as Ras Tafari, he visited the western nations some ten years ago. Let us now consider for a while the land over which he rules.

## CHAPTER III

### ETHIOPIA, THE UNCONQUERABLE LAND

Close to Europe was the continent of Africa, full of vaguely known possibilities. In 1850 it was a continent of black mystery; only Egypt and the coast were known. Here we have no space to tell the amazing story of the explorers and adventurers who first pierced the African darkness, and of the political agents, administrators, traders, settlers, and scientific men who followed in their track. Wonderful races of men like the pygmies, strange beasts like the okapi, marvellous fruits and flowers and insects, terrible diseases, astounding scenery of forest and mountains, enormous inland seas and gigantic rivers and cascades were revealed; a whole New World. Even remains, at Zimabawe, of some unrecorded and vanished civilisation, the southward enterprise of an early people, were discovered. Into this new world came the Europeans, and found the rifle already there in the hands of the Arab slave traders, and negro life in disorder.

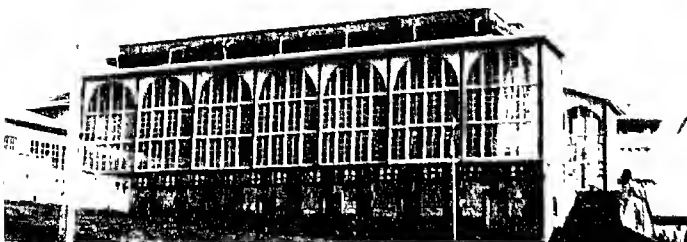
But in 1900, in half a century, all Africa was mapped, explored, estimated, and divided between the European powers. Little heed was given to the welfare of the natives in this scramble. The Arab slaver was indeed curbed rather than expelled, but the greed for rubber, which was a wild product collected under compulsion by the natives in the Belgian Congo, a greed exacerbated by the clash of inexperienced European administrators with the native population, led to horrible atrocities. No European Power has perfectly clean hands in this matter.

We cannot tell here in any detail how Great Britain got possession of Egypt in 1883 and remained there in spite of the fact that Egypt was technically part of the Turkish Empire; nor how this scramble nearly led to war between France and Great Britain in 1898, when a certain Colonel Marchand, crossing Central Africa from the west coast, tried at Fashoda to seize the Upper Nile.

Nor can we tell how the British Government first let the Boers or Dutch settlers of the Orange River district and the Transvaal set up independent republics in the inland parts of South Africa, and then repented and annexed the Transvaal Republic in 1877; nor how the Transvaal Boers fought for freedom and won it after the battle of Majuba Hill (1881). Majuba Hill was made to rankle in the memory of the English people by a persistent press campaign. A war with both



THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, ADDIS ABABA



BANQUETTING HALL OF THE CHIEFTAINS  
A very modern addition to the capital



RACE COURSE, ADDIS ABABA

[Face page 18]



IN THE GROUNDS OF THE BRITISH CONSULATE, ADDIS ABABA



IMPERIAL HOTEL, ADDIS ABABA

republics broke out in 1899, a three years' war enormously costly to the British people, which ended at last in the surrender of the two republics.

Their period of subjugation was a brief one. In 1907, after the downfall of the imperialist government which had conquered them, the Liberals took the South African problem in hand, and these former republics became free and fairly willing associates with Cape Colony and Natal in a Confederation of all the states of South Africa under the British Crown.

*In a quarter of a century the partition of Africa was completed. There remained unannexed three comparatively small countries: Liberia, a settlement of liberated negro slaves on the west coast; Morocco, under a Moslem Sultan; and Abyssinia, a barbaric country with an ancient and peculiar form of Christianity, which had successfully maintained its independence against Italy at the Battle of Adowa in 1896.*

H. G. WELLS.

MOST people in England know by now where Abyssinia is. Six months ago they didn't. A member of Parliament didn't. He asked me vaguely about this place where all the trouble was—"Somewhere near Morocco," he said.

"From Gibraltar to Addis Ababa is more than three thousand miles, as the crow flies," I said.

He looked startled.

"But it's in Africa, isn't it?" he said.

"Has it ever occurred to you," I answered, "that Africa's a very big place?"

"It must be," he said resignedly. "Would you mind drawing it on the back of this menu—with special reference to Abyssinia, I mean. I may have to talk about it soon, so I'd better get things straight."

That evening before retiring I got out an atlas and was very relieved to find that so far as I could remember it my map on the menu had been within recognisable range of the facts. You see, I didn't like to think of a British legislator getting one thousand miles wrong in his speeches because of my primitive cartography. Not that I expected international complications to result from such an error. I have long ago learned that the British



Empire isn't run by portly members of parliament but by slim young men in Whitehall with encyclopaedic knowledge and a nice taste in ties. They knew, I reflected, where Abyssinia was—had known for years. All this bother with Italy was no news to them. They'd seen it coming, they and their slim young predecessors, for the best part of half a century. They'd seen it coming and they would see it through.

If you work in the British Foreign Office, or in four or five rival foreign offices for that matter, Addis Ababa is one of the places you may be sent to—and you pray that you may not. It's not at the end of the earth. Not like Kashgar, for instance, which stands at the spot, beyond the Himalayas, where China, Russia, India, and Tibet come near to meeting; or the interior of Papua, where you may have to administer an area about as big as Wales with the aid of quinine, a rusty rifle and an unreliable compass; nor is it like some of those islands which have been described as pimples on the tail of eternity. There is a cinema there—in fact, two cinemas; there is what the Americans call a drug store—in fact, three of them; there's a post-office, a race-course, a night club and a police-station; in fact it should be home from home.

Yet few outposts of empire are as strange as Addis Ababa. For all its civilisation it is not welcoming to the European. The men of the west are never at ease till they have conquered, and Ethiopia is an unconquered land.

Abyssinia, that ancient kingdom of the East, is as its name implies a country of notable chasms. But the name is actually a corruption of the Arab word 'habesh,' a mixture, and this also is a just term. Races are mingled strangely in Abyssinia, and many learned men have laboured in vain to disentangle them.

"An inland country of north-east Africa between five and fifteen degrees north of the equator with its western frontier the southern Sudan and its eastern border less than one hundred miles from the Red Sea. . . ." That

is a rough idea of Abyssinia. It is a huge inland plateau, all its approaches carved by centuries of terrific rain into fantastic gorges. All round the base of the plateau lie swamps and deserts. Some of this low-lying land is swamp at one time of the year and desert at another. In the centre of the plateau and guarding some of its approaches are numerous mountain peaks all very strange in shape, of which the highest are just under fourteen thousand feet in height and extremely inaccessible. Very few of the broad valleys among the peaks are less than seven thousand feet in elevation, and Lake Tsana which is close on fifty miles long is well over six thousand feet above sea level. The area of the whole country is about 350,000 square miles.

The climate of the uplands is bracing, alpine in its purity and charm. In the lowlands there is every disease devised by nature for making life difficult to beast and man. There are two seasons, the dry and the wet, 'baga' and 'karamt.' The rains begin in the middle of June and last till well into October. December and January are perhaps the perfect months. Then comes the dry season, broken only by the 'little rains' of February. On the rain which falls in Abyssinia the life and prosperity of all Egypt most certainly depend, for these rains feed the Blue Nile.

The Blue Nile emerges from the southern end of Lake Tsana and after flowing south-east for fifty miles curves to the west before turning northward. It carries with it the precious silt which gives matchless fertility to the Egyptian flooded plain.

East of Lake Tsana rises 'Takkaze' the river called 'Terrible,' which falls from eight thousand to two thousand feet along a huge crevasse which winds among the peaks. During the rains this river rises twenty feet with fearful suddenness. Travellers speak of the land through which it flows as wilder and more ghastly in aspect than any other in the world.

But the mountain valleys are beautiful in springtime.

Roses, violets, cowslips and lavender are all to be found among the grasses, and masses of tulip line the lower edges of the hills. There are lilies, aloes, honeysuckle and orchids, and huge clumps of prickly broom.

In one day's climb you can pass from the fever-haunted lowlands to this paradise, Tyrolean in its clear and vivid colourings. Often in the north the downlands are bare and it is only the lower slopes of the hills that are wooded, but farther south there is every kind of tree. Huge date palms are to be found amid laurel and juniper; there are giant sycamores, wild olive, mimosa, and gum trees, often hideously twisted; and at lower levels are massed acacias and similar plants; but most impressive of all is the yellow pine, valuable forests of which are found.

Lake Tsana is a sheet of water of great beauty, and the lands around its banks are known as the granary of Abyssinia, for here especially the wheat crops flourish. Some years ago specimens of this wheat were brought to England and were reported to be of first-rate milling quality. The other grains are barley, millet, maize and 'teff.' Teff, technically known as '*Poa Abyssinica*', is a great favourite with all Abyssinians, and the spongy bread which they make from it, though curious in taste, is said to be extremely nourishing.

Not many people know that the coffee plant takes its name from Kaffa, in the south-west, a very prosperous province. It is here you can buy the best coffee in the world.

The birds in Abyssinia are many and wonderful in colour, but their voices are unpleasing. The country was described by one writer as 'abounding in unpleasant sounds.' Certainly the jackals make a weird and nerve-racking noise. The lions, too, can give disconcerting roars. Elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, crocodile and leopard; zebra, giraffe, hartebeest and klipspringer are all to be found in districts which suit them. There are monkeys of various kinds; an amazing catalogue of birds

of prey and game birds; while the civet cat which goes sneaking through the thickets at nightfall supplies the basis of many perfumes which ornamental women consider essential to their charms.

The human races that inhabit Abyssinia fall into three main classes—a Caucasian type much like the Bedouin, with oval face, keen nose, and lips which are well-formed and never curl up; the Gallas, who have large, well-built bodies, round faces, straight noses, and deeply-sunk but extremely bright eyes; and a third race whose hair is woolly and intensely curly and whose lips are thick. There are no negroes in Abyssinia except as slaves. Do not think of negroes; and do not bother about the scientific names. Remember the three types and you can't go far wrong. Also remember, if this classification sounds too simple, that there are about fifty languages—and dialects besides.

The inhabitants of the province of Tigre to the north-east are perhaps the best looking. They are known as Amharic, and fall into group one. The Gallas, whose provinces are Sidamo, Jimma, Arussi, and Wallega, are a definite second group, but the Shoans, in the central province round about Addis Ababa are harder to place, for they have characteristics in common with the Gallas; still, they are predominantly Amharic in type. The third group are tribes inhabiting the coastal areas. They are primitive.

Two or three other races offer interesting problems. There are the Falashas, similar in many ways to the Amharic, and best classed with them; but definitely Jewish in character and faith. Then there are the Guragies—the coolie race, who work for their living in the capital till they have earned enough to purchase small farms. There are also the despised Shankallas—the word itself is a term of reproach, whose mental processes are less rapid than those of their neighbours and who form the labouring class. Summing up this strange tangle it is

a fair generalisation to say that the Amharic tribes engage in war as a profession, the Gallas are pcasants; and that the coastal tribes are primitive nomads.

Not all the Amharas are soldiers. Some of them trade, a few are not ashamed to go in for agriculture; there are various crafts such as weaving in which they are very successful; and a large number of them enter the priesthood. Yet, broadly speaking, the ideal life for the Amhara is to serve a feudal chief, accompany him on his expeditions and share the spoils. This means that he gets his keep and usually a fair-sized piece of land with slaves to do the work. If he is a good manager he may have a surplus with which to trade, but often the soldier type is content to get his immediate requirements from the soil and to neglect its possibilities of development.

As will be seen, the existence of this soldier class with a vested interest in war and an inherited disinclination to work presents an awkward social problem to a progressive minded ruler. But in spite of their warlike nature and queer streaks of insensitiveness, the Amharas are a very good stock and have splendid possibilities if they can be caught young. Their origins are a puzzle, but they are clearly a dominant race. They have come out on top in the end of every war they have fought for the last fifteen hundred years.

It is these Amharas who make such a bad impression upon Englishmen—who refuse to see that their instinctive reaction of dislike is that of one dominant race when faced with another. Actually they are not bad fellows at heart, their chief fault being that when you act as though you are superior to them they just don't believe you. Treat them as equals and excellent relations are possible.

The principal cities of Abyssinia look amazingly beautiful when seen from the distant hills, for their white walls shine in the clear sunlight, entrancing splashes of brightness among the varied greens of the trees. But the impression of cleanliness and charm does not survive closer acquaintance. Hygiene is primitive in the extreme,



ELABORATE COIFFURE, SAID TO BE VERY PAINFUL.  
Note resemblance to European woman's "perm."



AN INTELLIGENT TYPE



THE COMPLETED COIFFURE

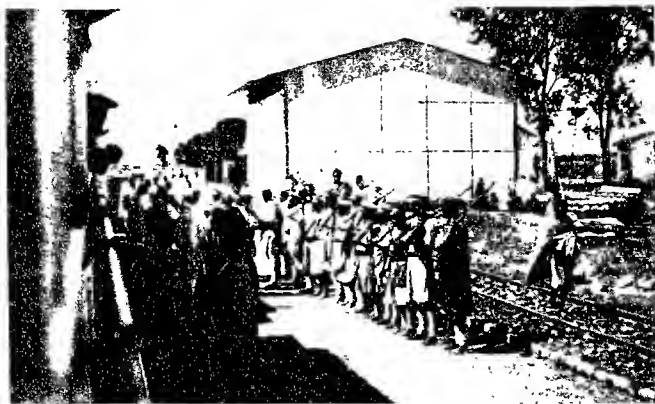
[Face page 24



HIGHLY GREASED TO SPARKLE IN THE SUN



YOUNG ETHIOPIA



WAYSIDE COURT ON RAILROAD TO ADDIS ABABA  
The judge, a provincial Chieftain, leans out of the  
carnage window to try a few cases en route

and but for the scores of dogs that are natural scavengers existence would hardly be possible, for though the principal streets are fairly clean, appalling smells creep out from the by-ways. Addis Ababa, the capital, has a population of about 120,000—to which at the moment must be added about three hundred war correspondents and photographers. There is no other town as big as this, though Harar and Diredawa are probably growing more rapidly. Most of the provincial capitals have populations between five and ten thousand, but it must not be forgotten that at certain times of year there are markets during which there may be enormous influxes into some of these towns.

For the most part the towns are collections of mud huts, but this term does not necessarily mean that all the buildings are squalid. Some of the buildings have considerable dignity and point to a very definite native style of architecture which it is the policy of the Emperor to revive and extend.

The only railway in the country runs from the capital to Jibuti, the port of French Somaliland. It functions with much greater efficiency than most travellers expect, and but for the fact that the French authorities at Jibuti inflict innumerable delays and examinations upon intending travellers, there is little to complain of in the service. The heat is no fault of the Abyssinians and it is against this that most complaints are directed. Roads there are practically none, though in the dry season the tracks are for the most part quite easily negotiated by car—except when they climb the hills, which are often difficult going even to the hardy mules. Donkeys and camels are other standard means of transport. Pack horses are not common, since the horse is usually kept for the chase or for war. If a servant is driving a donkey over the hills and the beast dies he must bring back the tail to his master. This is accepted as proof that the donkey has not been secretly traded, for no one would purchase a tailless beast.



In the time of Menelek it took six days for the news of the victory at Adowa, in the north, to reach the capital. Relays of swift horses were used to cover the distance which is about three hundred and sixty miles in a straight line. It is doubtful if this time could be improved upon to-day for the journey, but news is also carried by telephone and telegraph. The line is, however, in constant peril from both natural and human forces, (wire makes fine bracelets) so that the service is not to be relied on.

The trade of Abyssinia is not great in volume and has increased very slowly though there have been big improvements in the last few years. The country is practically self-contained. Cotton cloth, crockery and cooking utensils, and guns are the principal imports, in return for which there is a steady export of coffee and hides. The natives are expert tanners. Ivory, spices, and civet—the strong, musky perfume obtained from the glands of the civet cat, are also traded. Currency difficulties are the chief barrier to commerce, however, for the Maria Theresa thaler or dollar (nominal value about one shilling and eightpence) is not readily exchangeable. Small bars of salt, cartridges, and sometimes bottles are used. Some travellers say that needles are the most portable form of value that you can take on a journey. One needle has been known to purchase six chicken.

Concerning needles an interesting story is told. A European who had adopted this device to overcome currency difficulties had given his needles to his servant who was in charge of commissariat purchases, but the boy found it very difficult to carry them. If he pinned them to his garments they had a way of scratching him. He had lost the packet in which they had been at first.

When he asked his employer how the 'Frangi'—that is, foreigners, carried their needles he was told 'in cushions.' "In cushions?" he questioned, thinking he had not heard aright. "Yes, in cushions. The women give them to one another as presents. . . ."

That evening the European overheard the servant talking to the rest. "When a Frangi hates another his wife makes a great cushion and fills it with needles. Then it is sent to the enemy as a gift. Ah, they are clever, the Frangi. Doubtless the points are dipped in deadly poison, too. . . ."

Concerning law and order the most conflicting accounts are given. Some Europeans suggest that life is in constant danger. Others comment on the peaceable nature of the country except when there is a tribal feud. In the same breath we are told that the courts are so corrupt that it is impossible for any man to obtain justice and also that the Abyssinians are constantly invoking the law. They have been described as the most litigious race in the world. This contradiction probably results from the fact that judges accept gifts—the chiefs are usually the local judges. This is quite true, but it does not necessarily mean that they give unjust decisions in return for presents. Francis Bacon, the Lord Chief Justice of Queen Elizabeth's day, took gifts, it will be remembered, but strenuously denied that they were bribes. The giving of presents is naturally interpreted by Europeans as clear evidence of corruption, but this is probably less true than has been supposed.

It is in the collection of taxes that the worst wrongs occur. The old principle of ten per cent is the general rule, but when requisition is made in kind there is every chance for the tax-gatherer to deal unjustly. When it is added that the system is in the hands of local governors and that they receive no pay, that the church owns about one-third of the land and collects its own taxes by a method of spiritual blackmail, and that the idiom for governing a province is in Amharic "to eat" it, the reason why few peasants produce much more than their immediate needs is obvious. Under Haile Selassie, however, there have been sweeping reforms.

Witchcraft is practised widely. Solomon and Christ

are both thought to have been powerful wizards who used their gifts for good. This appears at first sight a very primitive belief, but it is hardly different in essence from the belief that Christ performed miracles to heal the sick. The Abyssinians are less different in thought from other Christian peoples than is usually stated. It is their way of expressing their beliefs which is strange rather than the beliefs themselves.

"Translate a mixture of Norman England, Renaissance Italy, and the France of Louis XIV into eastern terms and you have a fair idea of Abyssinia from the social point of view," said an Egyptian scholar recently. "It is arrogance on the part of Europe," he continued, "to think of herself as so far ahead of these people. The history of the last few years in Italy, Germany, Austria, and Spain—to name no other countries, is full of hideous crimes, much worse in nature than the light-hearted callousness of the Abyssinian."

One of the strangest mysteries of Abyssinia is the way in which the werewolf legend persists. Here is an account written by my father of an incident which he himself saw.

"It often happens in Abyssinia that people seem possessed by an evil spirit. This they call 'Boudah.' I witnessed these wonderful and dark occurrences many times, but will relate one instance only—and even in this case I must not describe all the terrible and disgusting details.

One evening when I was in my house at Gaffat a woman began to cry fearfully and run up and down on her hands and feet like a wild beast, quite unconscious of what she was doing. The onlookers said to me 'This is Boudah—and if it is not driven out of her she will die.' A large crowd gathered round the woman and many means of helping her were tried, but all in vain. She did not cease to howl and roar in a most terrible voice of great power.

At length a man was called, a blacksmith by profession, of whom it was said that he was in secret communication with the evil spirit. He called the woman, who obeyed him at once. He took her hand and dropped the juice of the white onion or garlic into her nose. Then he said to her, addressing the evil spirit within her: 'Why didst thou possess this woman?'

'Because it was permitted to me.'

'What is thy name?'

'My name is Gebroo.'

'Where is thy country?'

'My country is Godjam.'

'Of how many people hast thou taken possession?'

'Of forty people, both men and women.'

'I now command thee to leave this woman.'

'I will leave her on one condition.'

'What is that condition?'

'I want to eat the flesh of a donkey.'

'Very well,' said the blacksmith—'that thou shalt have.'

So a donkey was brought which had a wounded back, rubbed sore through carrying heavy loads; its back was quite sore and full of matter. On receiving permission from the exorciser the woman flung herself upon the donkey sinking her teeth into the exposed flesh which she bit out of the poor creature's back; and though the donkey struggled and kicked and ran off she did not fall but clung as if she was nailed to the animal's back.

At length the man called the woman back to him and said to the evil spirit: 'Well, art thou satisfied now?'

'Not yet,' was the reply.

'What more dost thou want?'

A disgusting mixture was asked for. This was prepared and placed in hiding, great care being taken that the woman should not see where.

'Now go and look for your drink,' said the blacksmith.

At once the woman began to run about in widening circles just like an animal, but suddenly she went straight to the place where the drink was hidden. She drank

the whole potful to the last drop. Then she came back to the blacksmith who said: 'Now pick up this stone.'

It was a stone so large that I am sure she would not have been able to have moved it in her natural condition, but she picked it up with ease and set it upon her head. Then, at a word of command she turned like a wheel so that the stone spun off. It fell one way and she the other. Both stone and woman lay motionless on the ground.

'Take her away now to her bed,' said the blacksmith—'for the Boudah has left her.'

The poor woman slept for about ten hours, then awoke and went back to her work and did not know anything of what had happened. I only state the facts, and leave the rest to my reader."

There is a glimpse of a terrible darkness. It is well to note the likeness of the story to certain incidents recorded in the New Testament. The use of garlic is also interesting. All who have a taste for horrors know that this leaf is widely believed to keep off the evil powers of vampires and other such creatures.

Abyssinian magic is a study in itself. From the lebasha, who enters into a trance to smell out thieves and trace the stolen goods, to the wizard who casts a death spell upon a mouse and sends it to the house of your enemy for an inclusive fee of anything up to thirty dollars, there can be found almost every variety of what some call hocus-pocus—and some do not. Love potions are a flourishing trade and so is fortune telling, for the Abyssinian women are no wiser than many of their sisters in western lands, so that whoever talks to them of the secrets of love and marriage can usually fleece them with impunity.

The strange thing about the marriage laws of Abyssinia is the way in which they favour women. There are roughly speaking four sorts of marriage, though in certain provinces strange local customs prevail. The least binding type of union is the contract for a year, by which a man guarantees to feed a woman, dress her in accordance with

his rank, and make her a handsome present. When the contract expires she has no further claim on him—though if he is in arrears with his promised money he cannot cast her off and may have to accept her as his legal wife for life. Although this may seem a cold-blooded type of arrangement, it is accepted and involves no social stigma, while to make the contract properly binding it must be blessed by a priest.

A slightly more binding form of ceremony is the trial marriage—an agreement conferring full marital status upon the woman but limited to two or three years. In the third type no time limit is mentioned, but divorce is quite easy, provided that proper financial arrangements can be arrived at.

The fourth type of marriage is so binding that not many women care to submit to it; but even this solemn union can be ended if the man becomes a serious criminal, goes mad, suffers from fits, or shames his wife publicly by preferring other women to her.

All of which legal possibilities seem to show that there is a far more rational attitude towards matrimony in Abyssinia than in Great Britain. At least you will never, in Abyssinia, find yourself in a state of what Mr. Herbert so admirably described as 'Holy Deadlock.'

It is very noticeable that a woman who has a proper business sense where marriage is concerned can, by driving a series of shrewd bargains with successive husbands, emerge still young enough to enjoy life, with a comfortable endowment. Sometimes such women form an attachment with a handsome young slave.

Some observers have stated that the moral standards of Abyssinia in these matters are low. The answer is that while the actual conduct of men and women compares quite favourably with western conditions, the frankness and logic of the arrangements expose to view much that exists, though well hidden, in civilised lands.

It remains to discuss the hidden riches of Abyssinia

for which the European nations have been quarrelling. This is difficult ground, for all the experts disagree. Some say that there are rich veins of gold in the mountains and point as proof to the existence of alluvial gold in certain rivers, notable in the Dadessa, which joins the Blue Nile at the point where that river turns northward. The Galla tribes are some of them said to be very skilful at sifting out this gold, but it would appear that their returns are not very high. The hills from which the Dadessa flows appear quite promising but so far there is no record of anything approaching a paying reef being found. Platinum, though, has been found and can be made to pay. So far only three per cent of the world's output comes from Abyssinia and the ores discovered have presented many difficulties; but careful and systematic search of the hills may lead to the discovery of sensational wealth. Many shrewd men are of this opinion; others claim that anything really worth while in the way of metallic resources would surely have been unearthed by now did it exist. Between these schools of thought the future will judge.

The belief in large reefs of gold goes back to Egyptian times. The legend of King Solomon's Mines has also some connection with Ethiopia. Owing to the many centuries during which the gold must have been sought for there are some people who think that the reefs may have been found and worked out. This may be true of gold but it can hardly be true of the deposits of oil which are confidently believed to exist by really expert observers. These authorities base their argument on the fact that it is highly probable from geological observation that the Iraq oilfields continue at a great depth in a westerly direction and come near to the surface again in Abyssinia. Certain configurations of landscape in the south-west are held to point strongly to oil. On the other hand the elusive nature of this liquid mineral is so well known that only when the first gusher spouts madly over the amazed Wollo Gallas will the matter be finally proved.

But even if the mineral wealth should prove scanty—and the present writer has a very well founded belief that it will not—the land has vast agricultural possibilities. Grain grows splendidly; the prospects of dairy farming are excellent; livestock thrive already, and with systematic irrigation of their pastures could be multiplied tenfold. The coffee crop, which is already fetching better prices as the result of the publicity given to the country by the war, may soon be a source of great revenue; while cotton of the finest type could be cultivated on a grand scale if the waters of the land were controlled for the use of man.

If, with the coming of better times, the world demand for food and raw materials increases, Abyssinia will be able to play an important part in meeting that demand. Critics who point to the present limited exports should remember that since Haile Selassie came to the throne world consumption has gone steadily downwards, so that only by the cleverest organisation has any increase of production been made to pay at all. Given a peaceful ten years after the present invasion has been dealt with, the Emperor may well astonish the world.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To attempt a sketch of the Emperor Haile Selassie's character and to chronicle the events of his reign is quite impossible without some explanation of the racial problems of his country. And to start on a discussion of these matters is to plunge into controversy and uncertainty. Abyssinia having been a melting pot of races, outlines are blurred and the theorists have a free hand. The history of the nation is also a matter of speculation. There are many big gaps.

Now the task of arguing over all these disputed theories is fascinating enough, but it must be left to the specialists. In this account of the mysterious people of the unconquered land, only those points will be stressed which are essential to the proper understanding of the position to-day.

Some readers may find what follows interesting, to others it may appear dull; but without this groundwork no clear idea can be obtained of the situation in which the Emperor finds himself. Unless the story of the Ark of the Covenant is known, accounts of how it is carried into battle lose their meaning; and the legend of Presbyter John, with its wealth of colour and splendour, is a valuable clue to the secret of the proud independence which the Ethiopians have always shown.

Nor can the Italian advance be understood unless it is seen as a last move in a long series of subtle intrigues by which the nations of the west have sought to become possessed of the reputed vast wealth of unknown Ethiopia. With this word of warning and encouragement the reader is invited to journey back in time and to review the history of this mysterious nation from its beginnings. To those



AN AMHARIC FAMILY



SOMALI WOMEN CARRIERS



SOMALI VILLAGE IN LOWLANDS

not accustomed to such investigations let it be said that they can be every bit as interesting as the enquiries of a detective into a murder mystery. Theory is pitted against theory, trails are found and lost; and if the shedding of blood is to your fancy, in this at least there will be no disappointment.

On the other hand, the student of the Bible will find much that throws light on Old Testament history and on the foundations of the Christian faith. For despite all the derogatory explanations with which mention of the Coptic Church is so often surrounded, let there be no misunderstanding of the fact that Ethiopia is a Christian nation, that in doctrine and tradition it can hold its own with the western branches of the faith, and that if it has fallen short of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, it shares in this just condemnation with all Europe, where men have slaughtered each other for centuries in the name of the Prince of Peace and show noticeable readiness to do so again if occasion offers.

With this brief apologia let us attempt to dig out the early history of a people on whom the searchlights of modern publicity are now falling with such odd and sinister effect.

The origin of the Ethiopian (or Amharic) nation is one of the problems which ethnological science has not yet solved. It is a baffling problem, concerning which there are three main theories. The first is that the main racial roots are to be found in Egypt but that Jewish and negroid elements so fused with the race in the centuries before Christ that predominant characteristics are now lacking; the second, that an invasion or migration of the Sabeans of south-west Arabia is the basis of the Amharic nation; the third, that, though the second theory may be partly right, it was probably a Caucasian tribe who, at a very early date, passed southwards through the Sabeian region and then crossed into Abyssinia, spending many years on the journey and acquiring certain Sabeian characteristics en route.

It is this third theory which is finding considerable support now. It explains the name Amhara as a corruption of Himyara—a district in southern Arabia, and counters the argument that the inscriptions at Aksum are “boustrophedon,” (that is, read right to left and then left to right in alternate lines, like an ox ploughing, says the Greek), which is a Sabean style, by the fact that *the Geez language, which is employed by the Coptic Church of Abyssinia, has twenty letters or more identical with Armenian.*

The father of the present writer arrived at somewhat similar hypotheses by a different line of argument, having noted how surprisingly light in skin certain Abyssinians are and how easily they mingle with white races. The theory of a Caucasian origin explains many racial peculiarities, and is, in fact, the most probable of those so far advanced.

But although the Yemen territory inhabited by the Sabeans has been more thoroughly explored than most parts of Arabia, Mr. St. John Philby, an outstanding authority on that region, writing of some disputed inscriptions said that their date could be fixed with certainty as not earlier than 800 B.C. and not later than the fifth century after Christ!

After which admission it is difficult for anyone to theorise with confidence concerning the Sabeans.

The story of a Caucasian race thrusting their way southward through Arabia and then turning west to cross the deserts and reach the mountain fastnesses of Ethiopia has a stirring ring. It is suggested that these tribes tired of the lowlands, being originally of mountain stock, and that learning of the highlands beyond the deserts migrated en masse. But there is no proof of this.

When Ethiopia first appears in history it is trading with Egypt as an equal, but there are soon records of the flag following trade and constant wars result between the two peoples. At times they are under one ruler; then there are insurrections and accounts of large-scale Egyptian expeditions to suppress them. There seems, too, at this time to have been considerable trade with the Jews.

The power of Egypt fades. The Ethiopians are isolated in the great hills. Meanwhile there has been established in Shoa an important kingdom, but there is little save legend concerning it.

The one great legend on which the whole history of Ethiopia relies is the story of the Queen of Sheba who visited King Solomon and whose personality made such an impression upon Jewish history. It is one of the world's great stories and is clearly founded on historic truth.

It is told in the Bible in splendid language:

The First Book of Kings—the ninth chapter—beginning at the twenty-sixth verse:

“And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.

And they came to Ophir, and fetched thence gold—four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.”

The actual position of Ophir has never been determined with any certainty, but this town or province is thought by some authorities to have been in south-west Arabia. The narrative does not say, however, that the Queen of Sheba came from there, nor that it was through the trade with Ophir that word came to her of Solomon.

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hid from the king which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built,

and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees and precious stones. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for the singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen, unto this day. And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned, and went to her own land, she and her servants."

The Song of Solomon, that amazing love-poem, may have referred to the Queen of Sheba, but its language though wonderful is so obscure that there can be no certainty. The line "I am black but comely, O thou daughters of Jerusalem," is difficult to understand, since it seems almost impossible that the Queen of Sheba should have been black in the negroid sense of that word. Indeed, all the evidence suggests that she was lighter

in colour than the present Ethiopians who have mingled with darker races—though never with negro blood—and are probably less white than their ancestors.

But leaving aside the problems raised by the Song of Songs the main biblical narrative remains, an excitingly told and very vivid story.

There must be some fact behind a story told with such power and detail as this, but the Ethiopians are probably wrong in thinking that the Queen of Sheba ruled in the holy city of Aksum, since her visit to Solomon must have taken place about the year 900 B.C., while there seems fairly clear evidence that Aksum was not of any importance till about the time of Christ. That there was considerable trade from Ethiopia long before this date is quite certain, however, and it seems probable in the highest degree that much of it was with the Children of Israel.

The commercial intercourse between the Ethiopians and the Israelites is explained by various legends as resulting from the fact that they are of the same race. At the time of the crossing of the Children of Israel one column (it is said) was cut off and compelled to turn south, arriving eventually in Abyssinia.

An interesting commentary on the biblical narrative is the Abyssinian theory to account for the parting of the waters. This is that the migrating Israelites did not cross the Red Sea but the region farther north where there now runs the Suez Canal. This was in those times a chain of shallow lakes. When the wind blew strongly and continuously from the north (as it still does at certain seasons) the waters of these lakes were piled up towards the Red Sea leaving the northern waters so shallow that at times they were hardly more than a series of pools through which it was easy to pick a way, though patches of quicksands were frequent. When the north wind dropped and the southern gales began—a change which often takes place with great suddenness, the waters rolled back.

The loss of the Egyptian pursuit is put down either to Pharaoh's charioteers having travelled so fast that they



did not have time to discern the quicksands and were thus engulfed before they could draw back, or that they were caught by a shift of the wind of exceptional suddenness and violence.

That something of this sort may well have occurred is clear to anyone who has travelled in the Red Sea areas, and it is an undoubted fact that there exists in Ethiopia a tribe known as the Falashas who are Jewish both in appearance and in religion. Their emergence was one of the minor scientific sensations of the present century. The Falashas had been completely cut off from the rest of the Jews until they were discovered and welcomed back into the fold.

As early as the time of King Theodore, that is round about the middle of the nineteenth century, the existence of these tribes was vaguely known, and it was, in fact, the tactless conduct of a Jewish missionary sent to them that was partly responsible for King Theodore's outburst against Europeans. But it was not until 1906 that the Falashas corresponded officially with the rest of their Jewish brethren. A congress of European Rabbis sent them greeting—to which they answered: "That you existed O our brothers in the one true faith we had heard but deemed it only a fable. Now that your letter gives us certain knowledge we rejoice to be received by you into the faith of Moses. . . ."

It is said in Abyssinia that the lost tribes of the escaping Israelites, as soon as they were settled in the new country, fitted out an expedition to search for their kindred. This started from the spot which was afterwards the site of the lost city of Adulis (whose ruins can still be seen in Annesley Bay, though now some four or five miles from the shore), and explored the east coast of the Red Sea until it linked up with the now victorious Israelites who had captured the Promised Land.

The trade between the two divisions of the race grew in volume until the Queen of *Shoa* decided to go and

visit the great king in the north of whose magnificence such wonderful tales were related and who was the kinsman of her people.

Now this may well be true, since the country from which the Queen of Sheba of the Old Testament came is very hard to track down with certainty. For a long while it was accepted that she was Queen of Saba, but it is now fairly certain that Saba was not ruled by a queen at the time of Solomon. Some historians have therefore shifted the domain of the legendary queen into northern Arabia, but in this case the difficulty arises that there was not any tribe in that quarter sufficiently wealthy to fit the story, since the Queen of Sheba is clearly ruler of a very rich nation. This difficulty is got over by suggesting that the first tellers of the story combined the wealth of one place with the queen of another, but that is hardly a satisfactory explanation of so circumstantial a tale as is set out in the First Book of Kings.

When it is remembered, however, that Shoa is in its earlier form Shoba, it is plain that a very strong case can be made out for the truth of the Abyssinian legend, which fits the whole facts very well indeed.

The legend is that the Queen of Sheba formed a temporary union with Solomon and that a son was born to her who inherited the beauty of his mother and the wisdom of the great king. The Queen returned to her country and made no other journey to Solomon, but when her son grew to manhood he enquired concerning his father and asked leave to visit him.

He went humbly and without any great array of followers. He did not tell Solomon his name, but no sooner had he stepped before the king than his royal bearing, his air of wisdom beyond his years, and his resemblance to his father, plainly revealed his identity. Solomon, proud to own so fine a son, welcomed him royally, talked with him concerning the mysteries of earth and heaven, posed problems for his solution, and expressed himself well satisfied with his attainments. When it was time for

Menelek to take his leave the king his father showed him a gift which he had prepared for him. It was a model in minute detail of the Ark of the Covenant. The copy was amazing in its exactitude, the workmanship without the least flaw.

But Menelek had all the knowledge of his father and knew that, magnificent as the gift appeared, it had no real value. The real Ark was a thing of God and he who possessed it was given power over all the earth. The replica was no more than a relic of curious craftsmanship and had, for all its splendour, no occult virtue to confer upon its possessor.

Menelek was determined to possess the real Ark, and he saw that the existence of the copy gave him an obvious opportunity. On the night prior to his departure, having discovered a secret entrance to the temple, he was able to effect substitution.

In the morning he left bearing with him among many costly gifts the authentic Ark of the Covenant, on the possession of which depended all Solomon's greatness.

From that time the fortunes of the Israelites declined and they were taken into captivity; while Menelek founded a great line of kings who, so long as their church possesses the mystic Ark, can never be conquered.

The justification for this apparently shabby trick was that King Solomon had not kept his promises to the Queen of Sheba and had tricked her into consenting to the alliance. She, too proud to admit her outwitting by complaining of it, had nevertheless harboured an undying grudge which she had instructed her son to repay in full should opportunity offer.

This, then, in its main outlines is the legend of Solomon and Sheba (of which there are many versions) as believed by the Ethiopians: The dynasty is dated from Menelek the First and the motto to this day is: The Lion of Judah hath conquered.

## CHAPTER V

### SOLOMON AND SHEBA

*As told in the Kebra Negast, a sacred book of Ethiopia*

THUS spake Christ Jesus: "The Queen of the South shall rise up on the Day of Judgment and shall dispute with and condemn and overcome this generation who would not hearken unto the preaching of My word, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." Now the Queen of the South of whom He spake was the Queen of Ethiopia. And the words "from the ends of the earth" picture the great length of the journey, the heat, the danger of hunger and thirst, and hardships not easily borne by the frail body of woman. The Queen of the South was in face and form the most beautiful of women and her mind, which was God's greatest gift to her, was of such exalted nature that she was drawn to Jerusalem that she might judge more nearly the mind of Solomon for thus was the will of God. The Queen had great wealth, for God had given her glory, and her riches were gold and silver and wondrous raiment, camels, slaves and caravans which journeyed for her by land and sea even as far as India and Egypt. And there was then in her service a certain captain of a caravan who had 520 camels and 370 ships and his name was Tamrin. When Solomon heard of this rich Ethiopian he sent him greeting and asked him to ship to him some of the produce of Arabia, gold and sapphires and the wood which no worm can consume. Tamrin, the merchant of the Queen of Sheba, made due delivery of his rich cargoes to Solomon and stayed several days in Jerusalem to admire the wisdom, the sweetness of words, and the skill with which Solomon ruled his people. Amazed at the wealth and splendour

amidst which Solomon moved the merchant left at last to return to his land and report to his Queen all that he had seen during his stay in Jerusalem. When Tamrin saw the Queen he described to her as one of many marvels the great temple which Solomon was building, telling how there were 700 carpenters and 800 masons working upon it, and he praised the great beauty of its decoration. Day after day Tamrin related to the Queen stories of the wisdom, power and justice of Solomon until at last she began to question him about Solomon himself. The more she heard about him the more she marvelled until the desire to visit him grew within her. She longed to go, but the great distance and the terrors of the journey filled her with fear. Yet at length she could resist her desire no longer but gave out to all her people that she must travel to Solomon to learn wisdom and love from him. Then spake her nobles: "Lady, wisdom is not lacking in thee, and it is because you are wise that you love wisdom. As for us, if you go we go too: if you stay here we will stay also. We will die with thee and we will live with thee." Tamrin made ready her caravan consisting of 797 camels and countless mules and asses; and the Queen set out on her journey.

On her arrival in Jerusalem, Solomon gave her royal welcome, paid her great honours and gave her apartments in his palace. A company of fifty singing men and maidens discoursed sweet music to her daily. Solomon came to her often and she was delighted with the courtesy of his behaviour towards her, his wisdom and judgment, his sweet voice and his eloquently fluent speech. Everything he spake was perfect, and she thanked God for bringing her to his threshold that she might hear his voice. And when he showed her the building of the House of God she saw that he was master in all matters, even to measurements and the instruction of the workmen in how the tools were to be handled; and she learned on another day that he knew the language of beasts and birds, and that he knew words of magic to compel all evil spirits to appear and do his

will. This great wisdom God had given him because he had not asked God for wealth or glory, or great victories, only for wisdom. Now Solomon and the Queen held long and frequent converse, and the theme of his every discourse was the beauty of wisdom. And when Solomon had explained to her the might and power of God the Creator of all the World, the God of Israel, the Queen forsook the worship of the Sun and bowed before the One True God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

So Makeda tarried in Jerusalem for a space of six months and when this time was passed she sent for the King and spake thus: "Though I would willingly linger in thy presence that my wisdom might increase, yet must I now return to my own land." Now when she gave him warning of her departure Solomon knew that he desired her in marriage, and he begged her to dwell with him still longer that she might be complete in wisdom. And the Queen consented and continued a dweller in his house. A great banquet was proclaimed in her honour and a place was set for her where she could see all and yet remain herself unseen. Her chamber where she sat was encrusted with bright jewels, rich carpets covered the floor costly beyond the wealth of men, and the tapestry was of royal purple heavy with perfumes and the scent of dried herbs which burned in lamps in every corner. And there was served to her within her perfumed bower a rich feast of dainties and she ate her fill of the highly-seasoned dishes and drank deeply of the spiced wines, for it was the wish of Solomon that the hotly flavoured bakemeats and the spiced wines should both stimulate her senses and cause her to thirst. Which was indeed so.

And when the feasting was done then Solomon approached the Queen, saying "Take thou thine ease here for love's sake until daybreak." And she said unto him: "Swear to me by thy God, the God of Israel, that thou wilt not take me by force." Solomon said, "I swear unto thee that I will not take thee by force, but thou must swear unto me in thy turn that thou wilt not take by force

anything that is in my house." Then the Queen replied with laughter "Why being a wise man dost thou speak as a fool? Thinkest thou that I shall steal anything, or carry out of the house of the king, anything that the king hath not given unto me? Think not that I have come hither through love of riches, for my own kingdom is as wealthy as thine, and there is nothing that I wish for that I lack. Assuredly I have come only in quest of thy wisdom." And Solomon said to her, "As thou wouldst make me swear, swear thou also to me, for swearing, is meet for both of us, so that neither of us be unjustly treated. And if thou wilt not make me swear I will not make thee swear." "So be it," the Queen made answer, "Swear to me that thou wilt not take me by force and I on my part will swear not to take by force thy possessions." These oaths they swore.

Then the servants prepared a bed for the King on one side of the chamber and one for the Queen on the other side. And Solomon ordered a servant to fill a clean vessel full of water and place it where the Queen might see. Then the servant was bidden to leave them alone together.

Now Solomon's orders to his servant had been given in the Hebrew tongue which the Queen could not understand. So in ignorance of what had been said the Queen retired to her bed. Shining pearls set in the roof lighted the room and Solomon watched by their radiance the Queen who had fallen into a light sleep. But soon Makeda was awake, her lips, throat and mouth all parched through eating the seasoned foods and drinking the spiced wines. Though she pressed her lips together and moved her tongue, no moisture would come to them, and at last she was driven to rise from her bed and drink from the pitcher which she had seen the servant set down in the room. For a while she watched Solomon closely to be sure that he slept, then quitting her bed she went with silent feet towards the water jar. But Solomon had not slept and when he saw the Queen reach out towards the pitcher he leaped up from

his bed and forced her to stay her hand. Then spake Solomon: "Why hast thou broken thy oath that thou wouldst not take by force anything that is in my house?" And the Queen in maidenly confusion made reply "Is the oath broken by my drinking water?"—to which the King retorted, "Is there anything that thou hast seen under the heavens that is of more value than water?" And the Queen said, "I have sinned against myself and thou art released from thy oath; but let me drink water for the sake of my thirst." Said Solomon, "Am I truly released from my oath which thou didst make me swear?" The Queen replied, "Be released from thy oath, only let me drink water." He permitted her to drink of the water, and when she had drunk her fill he worked his will with her, and they slept together. And when they were made one and lay together there came to Solomon a strange dream in which he saw the sun come down from heaven and linger over Israel yet then pass over to Ethiopia.

Now with the sunrise the Queen pleaded with the King saying "Dismiss me, and let me depart for my own country." So Solomon took a sorrowful leave of the Queen of Sheba, first loading her with many rich gifts and much costly raiment. He gave her six thousand camels and wagons to travel the long journey; also a ship to sail the seas, and a vessel which moved through air, the mystery of which had been shown to Solomon by God himself. Then were farewells exchanged with many and wondrous ceremonies, and as the caravan made ready to leave Solomon drew the Queen apart and gave her a ring from his little finger. "Take this," he said, "that thou mayest not forget me. And if it shall chance that I obtain seed from thee, this ring shall be a sign of it, and if it be a man child, it shall come to me. And the peace of God be with thee. Go in peace." So the Queen departed on her journey and when she had reached Bala Zadisareya she gave birth to a son nine months and five days after she had left Solomon. She came at last to her own country, and was welcomed by her people with great



magnificence, thereafter ruling them with greater wisdom so that God made her kingdom more powerful still.

#### SOLOMON AND HIS SON

Now when the prince was come to his twelfth year he wondered who was his father, and his friends after much questioning told him, King Solomon. He then began to ask his mother questions about his father which she answered, saying at the same time that as his father's country was so far away and the journey so long and dangerous it were better that he remained at his mother's side. But ten years later, when the prince had grown into a bold and handsome young man and a great hunter, he announced to his mother his determination to seek out his father.

Makeda, since her return from Jerusalem, had put down idolatry and had converted her people to the faith of the God of Israel. But she still coveted the possession of the fringes of the Ark of the Covenant, in which she was certain wondrous virtue lay. When she was informed of her son's determination she sent for him and after giving him the ring which Solomon had once worn on his finger, she made him swear that he would return to his own land and that he would not take unto himself a wife not of his own people. Then she sent for Tamrin, who had become her chief adviser, and charged him to take the prince to see the king in Jerusalem, but to be sure to bring him back again to his own country.

When the two travellers with their huge caravan arrived in Gaza the populace knew at once by his face and form that Ebna Hakim was the son of their King Solomon. Such was the likeness that some of the leading townsfolk sent messengers hurrying to Jerusalem, and when the cavalcade arrived there was not the slightest doubt in the King's mind that the young man was indeed his own son.

After embracing him and kissing him, Solomon exclaimed, "He is handsomer than I, and his form and stature are those of David, my father, in his early manhood." Then he arrayed the prince in rich raiment, and gave him a girdle of fine gold, and set a crown upon his head; and after placing a ring upon his finger he seated him on a throne as his equal. And the people hailed him saying, "He is an Israelite of the seed of David, being fashioned perfectly in the likeness of his father's form. We are his servants, and he shall be our king."

Then Ebna Hakim gave Solomon the ring his mother had given him, and in return asked for the fringe of the Ark of the Covenant which the Queen coveted that her people might worship it for ever.

Now in due time there came Tamrin with a message to Solomon from the Queen saying:

"Anoint my son, consecrate him, bless him, and send him away in peace."

Yet it was not Solomon's will that the prince should leave, and he took great pains to persuade him that it was better to live in the land of the Tabernacle of the Law of God than to return to Ethiopia. But the luxury which Solomon showered on him and the life in Jerusalem had no charms for Ebna Hakim and he pined for his own country.

In vain did King Solomon plead with his son, pledging his word that he would name him as his successor. The young prince replied: "My lord, it is impossible for me to abandon my country and my mother. I swore to her by her breasts that I would return to her quickly, and that I would not marry a wife here." Solomon, knowing at last that he could not turn his son from his purpose, summoned his councillors and confessed to them that he could not persuade the prince to remain in Jerusalem. Having failed in this he would decree that Ebna Hakim should be king of Ethiopia, and that the councillors should send their eldest sons to serve with him as they themselves served Solomon in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Then taking Ebna Hakim into the Holy of Holies they laid hands on him, and anointed him king, bestowing on him the name of David, and Zadok the priest revealed to him the mysteries by which a monarch rules his people and taught him the threefold law of Israel. And Solomon gave his son horses and chariots, camels, mules, great wagons, gold, silver, and all kinds of precious stones, that he might found in Ethiopia a new kingdom of Israel equal in magnificence with the old. But the councillors, while preparing their sons for the great journey, cursed Solomon for robbing them of their sons.

Now it chanced that the sons of the nobles who were to be the companions of Ebna Hakim met to discuss their future in the new country whither they were bound and their faces were darkened since they knew that they would never see their homes again. Yet their greatest fear was that when they left the city wherein rested the Ark of the Covenant and where was built the Shrine of Zion, the abode of God himself, God would no longer protect them, for they were going to a far off country where they believed there was no God.

And after much speech had passed between them, Azarias, the son of Zadok the High Priest, having sworn his fellows to strict secrecy, told them of a plan to end their doubts and fears.

"Let us take with us when we depart," he said, "Our Lady of Zion. Do not ask me how—for I will show you. If you follow my plan boldly we shall be able to take Our Lady with us. And if we are discovered and they slay us, what matters that since we shall die for Our Lady."

Then with money taken from his companions Azarias approached a clever carpenter whom he ordered to make planks of wood from which might be constructed a framework exactly equal in size to the Ark of the Covenant. He told the carpenter that they wished to make a raft lest they should suffer shipwreck, and when the workman gave them the planks they took them to the sanctuary of



STREET SCENE, NEAR ADDIS ABABA

The clear sunlight falls on a moving and colourful crowd

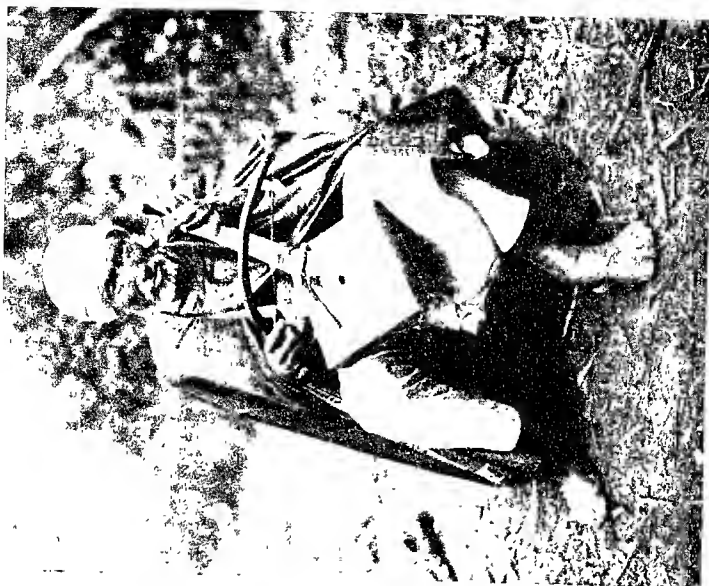


ABYSSINIAN BEER JARS

[Face page



A CHILD BICCAR



THE OLD MUSICIAN  
He is always to be found in the Market at Addis Ababa.

Zion and hid them beneath the coverings of the Ark.

That night an angel appeared to Azarias and told him to ask the young prince to request of King Solomon permission to offer up a last sacrifice. When Solomon heard this he was overjoyed and sent 100 bulls, 100 oxen and 10,000 sheep and goats, together with great quantities of bread and flour. And when the offering had been completed Azarias, the Lord being with him, called his friends together, and they entered the sanctuary—for they found all the doors unlocked. They carried the Ark away to the house of Azarias and put the structure of planks in its place, spreading the covers as before. And the Ark remained hidden seven days at the house of Azarias, covered in purple and with lamps set before it.

Now when all was prepared for the journey Ebna Hakim went to take farewell of his father and to receive the blessing of the king. The stolen Ark was placed on a wagon together with the stores and it was covered with piles of soiled clothes to hide it from sight. And as the sons of the nobles were about to depart, Solomon, remembering that Makeda had besought him for the fringe of the covering of the Ark sent for Zadok and told him to bring it, putting in its place a new covering which he would give him. And when this was done Solomon gave the old covering to the Prince who was overjoyed that his mother's greatest wish had been granted. And Zadok, having removed only the outer covering when making the change, had noted nothing amiss.

Then Ebna Hakim and his followers went forth under divine protection for there marched always before them Michael, Chief of all the Archangels, who showed them the way by land and sea and made all smooth, spreading his great wings to shield them from the burning sun.

And as they journeyed neither man nor beast touched the ground, for even the heavy wagons were lifted up

into the air, and there was not one in all the company who suffered either thirst or fatigue or any of the tribulations of travel.

Now their first halt was at Gaza, which was a gift of Solomon to the Queen before she left him, and a day later they came to Egypt, having travelled in that day a space so great that for the fastest of caravans it would be deemed a thirteen days' journey. And when they were halted Azarias and his fellows made confession to the prince of what was done, and they calmed his fears by telling him that the Ark could not be sent back to his father since it had travelled with them not by the strength of man or of beast but by the will of God. Then they dressed the Ark before him and praised God for his mercies, and Ebna Hakim danced before the Ark.

So the Ark was dressed in purple and set on high in a great wagon and musicians and drummers made loud and jubilant music and the people shouted aloud. And the waters of Egypt stood still and the false gods fell down in their temples and were smashed in pieces as the Ark approached. Once more the caravan was lifted from the ground and they crossed the Red Sea at a height of three cubits while the birds of the sea sang together and all the creatures of the deep chanted the praise of Zion. And thus they came to the borders of Ethiopia.

Now Solomon, alone in his palace, was heavy of heart and as he meditated on all that was passed he remembered that he had dreamed an ill dream while Makeda slept beside him so he called for Zadok and told him the story of the dream. And when the aged priest had divined its meaning he trembled, for he knew that glory had passed from Israel to Ethiopia.

Then Solomon enquired of him if he had seen the Ark when he had changed the covering and Zadok shook with fear and said that he had not. So the King commanded him to delay not one instant but to hasten and see if aught of ill had happened.

Thus Zadok went to the sanctuary, and when he found nothing but the framework which had been set in place of the Ark he staggered and lay as one dead upon the ground. And when Solomon learned that the Ark was gone from him he despatched swift horsemen to capture Azarias and all his company, and he gathered his soldiers together and set out on the road to the south. But he went no further than Egypt for when he questioned the people of Pharaoh they told him that the prince's caravan had left nine days before and Solomon knew that such speed was the will of God. Weeping and sick at heart he returned to Jerusalem and with the elders lamented bitterly for the symbol of God's mercy which was passed away from Israel.

But Ebna Hakim, when he neared the coast of Ethiopia, sent messengers to herald his coming and to report that he carried with him the Ark of the Covenant, the Lady of Zion. And Makeda sent out a trumpeter to proclaim the wondrous tidings and started out with a great escort of soldiers for Aksum, the capital of her country, there to prepare a welcome for her son.

And the Ark shone like the sun in the heavens so that when the Queen saw it she bowed her head and clapped her hands and beat her breasts, laughing aloud as she danced before the Ark of Zion. Many tents and great pavilions were pitched around the city and there followed a feast so great that none saw its equal. And the Ark was enshrined in the fortress of Dabra Makeda and 1,300 men were set to guard the great tent in which it was placed.

And three days later the Queen stepped down from her throne in favour of Ebna Hakim and he became the master of 17,700 horses of war, 7,700 brood mares, and 1,000 mules, and robes of honour, gold and silver and everything of value, and the throne.

And Makeda made her nobles swear that they would never again set a woman upon the throne, and that only the seed of David, the son of Solomon, should reign



over Ethiopia; and the nobles and councillors swore as she wished. Then the Queen made Azarias high priest, and the people abandoned augury, divination and magic, and they turned to the worship of the One True God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The version of the Kebra Negast story told in this chapter is abridged and simplified. While acknowledging with gratitude the advice and help of Monsieur Adol Mar, Counsellor to the Emperor; His Excellency Warqneh Martin; and others, on various points of detail—I have followed the masterly version of Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, whose translation, especially in the dialogue, comes amazingly close to the spirit of the original.*

*Asfa Yilma.*

## CHAPTER VI

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE COPTIC CHURCH

*“Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God. . . .”*

SOLOMON lived nine hundred years before Christ. Following the legend of the Queen of Sheba's visit, Ethiopia recedes into the mists of history and it is difficult to pierce the veil. But there is clear evidence that a young Phoenician of Alexandria named Fromentius made his way south to Abyssinia in the early part of the fourth century. The story is that he went with two companions, Meropius, a merchant of Tyre, and a Greek, Aedesius. Meropius, the leader of the expedition, is said to have been killed by Ethiopians on the shores of the Red Sea while on his way to India, but the two young men with him were taken to the Holy City of Aksum and gained great favour with the King. Their great intelligence and manly bearing gave them, in course of time, considerable power in the kingdom, and they lost no opportunity of interesting the friendly ruler in the teaching of the Christian Church.

The origins of the city of Aksum and the state which it ruled are rather obscure, but it seems clear that in the first century after Christ the Greek traders set up permanent colonies along the shores of the Red Sea and that one of these became very wealthy, gaining control of a people of some culture, with whom the colonists mingled, and whose prosperity they considerably increased. This people were certainly the forerunners of the modern Ethiopians. They were not conquered by the Greeks, who merely mixed with them as equals, obtaining power by superior commercial ability. How long the city had existed prior to the arrival of the Greeks it is impossible

to say—certainly many thousands of years, if the Ancient Book of Aksum, one of the great treasures of the Coptic Church, is to be believed. So far as historical evidence goes there is no mention of the city until the first century after Christ, but it was clearly very much older. When, in the third century, Fromentius was brought there he found the city at the height of its prosperity and fame.

The conversion of the Aksumites to Christianity was probably much easier than Fromentius expected. They believed in one God and had been trading with Christian merchants for at least two hundred years. The legends say that St. Matthew brought the gospel to Aksum within twenty years of the death of Christ, but whether that is true or not, the ease with which the young Phoenician missionary gained the ear of the King suggests that the doctrines which he preached were not entirely unfamiliar. There was also a political motive which possibly influenced the King. He had many enemies, and an alliance with the great powers of the Mediterranean—Rome was by now in rapid process of becoming a Christian empire—must have been a very strong inducement, had such been needed, for the King to embrace the Christian faith.

Fromentius returned to Alexandria and was consecrated first Bishop of Ethiopia in A.D. 326. It was the great Athanasius who conferred the bishopric upon him and whose famous "*Epistola ad Constantinum*" gives impressive particulars of what the young evangelist had suffered and achieved.

After the first success of Fromentius, however, there was a period when the new faith made very little progress, and it was not until the influx of monks began in the sixth century that the Christian Church obtained a real hold upon the land. The details of the conversion are very puzzling, for some records say that it was not Fromentius but St. Philip who first brought the gospel, and that the Phoenician evangelist found an established Church. This seems unlikely, though the probability of earlier

missionary visits is considerable. What is important is that the doctrines preached by Fromentius, of which more will be said, were preserved in astonishing purity while western Christianity was undergoing considerable and vital changes, and that they are found unaltered in Ethiopia still.

Yet to-day if there is one Ethiopian institution which Europeans find more puzzling than the rest, it is the Coptic Church. The ordinarily well-informed churchman in Great Britain is well aware that besides his own Church, there are two other Christian Churches, those of Rome and of Byzantium. He is aware in general terms of how this division, a natural result of the splitting of the Roman Empire by pressure from the barbarian tribes along the Danube, came into being; and if he is less clear as to the doctrinal distinctions involved, at least remembers that in the matter of Christian unity the Greek Church has proved less intransigent than that of Rome.

But when—with the entry of Ethiopia into the news, he discovered that this last of the African kingdoms was a Christian country, and that it had a church of its own, an offshoot from that of Alexandria, which was known as the Coptic Church, he found the fact disturbing. Religious matters were surely complex enough already without this fresh complication. Most Englishmen, it is to be feared, evaded the question by saying—"One of those queer Eastern faiths—not really Christians, you know"—and leaving it at that.

When, however, it appeared that war was certain, the question of religion cropped up once again. If the Ethiopians were indeed a Christian people, who, surrounded by warlike pagans had succeeded with the aid of God and of the hills from whence came their help, in preserving their religion intact for many centuries, it seemed rather strange that they should now be forced to defend themselves against a Christian power, especially that power which sheltered the head of one of the three great Christian Churches within its borders.

Honest churchmen in Britain were conscious of a desire to know something more definite of the history and doctrines of the Coptic Church.

A good deal of information was to be had in the Library of the British Museum. Unfortunately, most of it lay between the covers of such works as *Schenute von Atripe und die Entstehung des national-aegyptischen Christentums* (J. Leipold, Leipzig, 1903), where, it is to be supposed, it was allowed to lie. This chapter is an attempt to exhume a little of the extensive material available and to give a fair summary of the religious principles, history and present character of the Coptic Church, the whole strange story of which, taking the student as it does to the struggles of the early Christians, is a puzzling and fascinating by-path in world history.

We to-day, while rendering homage to the devotion which inspired the early Christians to suffer the most terrible tortures for their faith, are inclined to set them down as quarrelsome and pedantic factionaries when we read the tale of the disputes in which they so often indulged. This is not altogether fair for, clearly, if a man thinks his faith sufficiently important to lay down his life for it, any fellow-believer who seems to him to be doing that faith damage is guilty of an appalling crime. And in those times appalling crimes were met by appalling measures.

Before we dismiss the "two and seventy jarring sects" as idle "pip-splitters" (we should say hair-splitters to-day, but the ancients spoke of pips) we must remember that under the stress of persecution they believed with a fierceness hardly to be experienced at the fireside of a country vicarage, and, as is true of everything and everybody, showed only too plainly the defects engendered by their good qualities.

Osiris, the harvest god of Egypt, was believed by the Egyptians to die and rise again with the changing seasons. Pharaoh was his earthly incarnation. Isis, goddess of the

crescent moon and star of the sea gave birth, after the death of Osiris, to Horus, a god of the dawn, who became Osiris when he reached full stature. Isis was pictured as standing on the crescent moon with the infant Horus in her arms. Later, at the time of the Greek conquest, a great temple was set up in Alexandria known as the Serapeum. There Serapis was worshipped—who is Osiris, Isis and Horus—three in one. Serapis is known as “he who saves souls.” This God confers immortality upon true believers.

From this brief and doubtless in some ways misleading summary of Egyptian belief (for their logic was so different from ours that only after years of study can a European penetrate towards the real meanings of Egyptian worship) it can be seen that Christianity had much in common with the Alexandrine cults. Isis was certainly confused with the Virgin and Serapis with the Trinity.

The Greeks in Alexandria, from whose fermenting minds so many philosophies emerged, were the first converts to Christianity, but there is ample evidence that within two hundred years of the death of Christ His faith had spread widely among the Egyptian population. By this time Rome was master of the Mediterranean world and soon was persecuting Christianity. The Christians of Alexandria suffered with the rest and many of the martyred were Egyptians. St. Anthony, who perished somewhere about the year A.D. 270, was of Egyptian blood.

These Christian Egyptians were called Copts. The word as spelt to-day in Europe represents the attempts of twelfth or fourteenth century travellers to translate into western tongues the Arabic word *Kibt* which is a corruption of the Greek word for Egyptian. The Coptic language, which fell out of usage four hundred years ago, was a queer mixture resulting from the confusion of tongues in Alexandria. It arose from attempts to write the spoken Egyptian language in Greek characters.

In the early days of Christianity the Copts adhered to much the same doctrines as the rest of the scattered Christian Church; but when, with the coming of power there came also dissensions, the Christians of Alexandria, who were simple-minded souls, always stood for the plainest and to them most straight-forward presentation of Christian belief. They had never any gift for the subtle theology which developed in Byzantium and Rome.

Athanasius, who is said to have received inspiration from St. Anthony, was Bishop of Alexandria in the early fourth century. He steered a noble course among the disputes of Arians (who were themselves divided into Anomoeans and Homoeans), Sabellians, Niceans and all the other shades of Christian opinion, and kept the Alexandrians well within the boundaries of the Church; but in the following century a further dispute arose which was to alter the whole trend of events in Alexandria and lead finally to the isolation of the Copts from the rest of Christendom.

In the fifth century certain elusive doctrines were responsible for continual trouble within the framework of the Church, which had by this time conquered Rome and was flourishing while the Roman Empire declined. There were many sects but the chief lines of demarcation were those between the Monophysites and the Nestorians. These latter considered that Christ had a dual nature; while the Monophysites insisted that His nature was one whole. This view was later expressed by the Monothelites in a rather different form when they said that Christ had two distinct natures but only one will. The earlier Monophysites admitted no such modification of their belief. In this they were supported by the Copts.

The Nestorians not only maintained the dual nature of Christ but held views concerning the Virgin Mary which were a terrible insult to followers of her cult, maintaining that she must not be addressed as "Mother of God"; and, as a consequence the Church was torn to pieces by

these contending sects. Several councils were held to attempt settlement. But while wise Christians aimed at composing differences, the politically-minded were not slow to see that these differences could be exploited for their own advancement. The Synods were thus not friendly discussions of common difficulties but rather the battleground of factions who sought to obtain control of the Church and to share the spoils of office.

The famous Synod of Ephesus (Whitsuntide A.D. 431) resulted in the defeat of the Nestorians, but this verdict was soon reversed and though in the end both of the disputing sects lost favour with the orthodox Church, the Nestorian doctrine fading away towards the East, before this had happened the Copts had rebelled.

The patriarch Dioscurus having been condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, his Coptic followers in Alexandria refused to abandon their Monophysite beliefs. They were thus denounced as heretics, Dioscurus was deposed and a new Bishop elected. The Greeks in Alexandria sided with the orthodox Church. They were known as Melkites.

There was a good deal more than a religious difference in this split. It is plain that national feelings were involved. For the next two hundred years there were two Churches in Alexandria and their constant quarrels did much to weaken the Christian faith and to prepare the way for the startling triumph of Islam which was so soon to break upon the world. Theological issues seem curiously unreal to-day, but it is impossible not to admire the tenacity of the Copts. Heraclius, Emperor at Byzantium, having driven back Chosroes II of Persia, who had overrun the whole of the Near East and had taken Jerusalem, did his best, while the outer enemies of Christendom were defeated, to heal the inner dissensions. He made a great effort in A.D. 638 to compose the differences of Greek and Copt in Alexandria. At first he was impartial, but when the native Church proved uncompromising Heraclius employed severe persecution. But in 642 Heraclius died.



Without him the Eastern Empire was terribly weakened, and the Moslems were soon masters of all Egypt.

Meanwhile in Abyssinia the Monophysite creed brought by Fromentius flourished, while under ceaseless persecution many of the monks of Egypt gradually drifted south. Justinian, the Roman Emperor, knowing that the Ethiopians were a Christian people, asked their aid on behalf of Christians persecuted in Arabia, and this was loyally given. During a brief period of glory (A.D. 525-600) the Aksumite kings subdued Yemen but the rise of Islam forced Christianity back into the hills where it stood secure.

But in the early eleventh century when the Moslems were at bay an internal peril threatened the Coptic Church. The Falasha tribe—whose Jewish ritual has been mentioned, revolted, and for close on fifty years were masters of the land. They lacked numbers, however, and a long struggle of attrition broke their power, so that by the time that the young Ottoman Empire was offering the sword or the Prophet to the whole of Northern Africa, the Copts had sufficiently recovered to put up a valiant resistance. Even so Mahmoud Grain, most brilliant of the Ottoman commanders, penetrated far into the hills; but he could do nothing against the unconquerable Ethiopians and in the end was forced to retreat with marauding hillmen harassing his rearguard.

Next came the attack of the Gallas from the south. Their religion was pagan and the power of their assault is shown by the fact that even to-day, though not a dominant race, they occupy lands far northward of their original territories. Some estimates state that nearly fifty per cent of the population of Ethiopia are Gallas.

Portuguese Catholics, and then the Jesuits, attempted conversion in vain. The only result was to make the opposition harden, and to drive the Coptic Church back into union with the Copts of Alexandria, the link with whom had been broken during the Mohammedan encirclement.

The Alexandrine Copts had had a hard time. Under Mohammedan rule every possible insult was heaped upon them. They were taxed at arbitrary levels and their goods seized for payment, and for the purposes of collection of poll tax their monks were actually numbered and branded. Their churches were thrown to the ground—sometimes when the congregations were within them, and any church properties which had intrinsic value were stolen; while those which had not were defiled and destroyed.

Every device by which Christians could be pressed into the faith of the Prophet was employed. To single them out for abuse and ridicule, if not for violence, the Christians were at various times compelled to wear degrading dress. But though many lost heart and went over to Islam the rest maintained their faith.

In spite of oppression of every kind they could still fight when it was necessary, and in the race riots which disturbed Alexandria and became open war at Cairo in the early fourteenth century, the Mohammedans were resisted with determination. But the pressure was too great, and the Christians decreased in numbers very rapidly in the following hundred years. At length they were reduced to living in squalid, half-fortified quarters—a sort of Christian ghetto. But their time of deliverance was at length at hand.

With the growth of the power of Christian Europe persecution was to some extent checked, and when the British Government took over the control of Egypt the Copts came into their own. Their religion was secured from oppression of any kind and they, as Christians, found it easier than the Mohammedans to accept administrative positions. They had always been a clever race, and when the load of tyranny which had weighed upon them for so long was removed they showed great capability both in the civil service and in trade.

Mass-produced goods of European origin have now undercut them in their best markets, however, and the

importation of more skilled and almost equally cheap labour from Southern Europe has driven them out of industry. They have taken to agriculture, many with great success.

But when the walls of the old "quarters" came down and the Copts mixed freely with the rest of the population, it was very noticeable that, with the stimulus of persecution removed, rapid decay of faith set in. With riches and ease there followed a weakening of moral fibre and the freedom of Mohammedan life—more especially the ease with which divorce is possible, led to many "conversions."

The whole history is paradoxical. That the descendants of those who suffered for centuries to preserve their faith should, now that the persecution is ended, be snared by the laxer morality of Islam to abandon the religion of their ancestors seems inexplicable. But the facts are easily observed.

One point is worth a final word. Owing to the centuries of ostracism to which they were subjected intermarriage with other strains of blood was rare; and thus the Christian Copts of Egypt show in almost uncanny perfection the physical mould of the Egyptian race before the Mohammedan conquest. This makes them of great interest to the ethnologist, for such survivals as this are hard to find in a world where races and religions mingle and change and disappear.

The Coptic Church of Ethiopia is unaffected by the decay of the parent church. It flourishes, and at least one third of the country's wealth is in its hands. But it is still ruled in theory from Alexandria. The Head of the Church breathes into a leather bag and sends it to his chosen representative in Ethiopia. This priest breathes in the precious breath and thus becomes imbued with the spirit of his superior and authorised to wield his power.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE WRITINGS OF COSMAS

THE earliest Christian map-maker, Cosmas of Alexandria, named also Cosmas Indicopleustes on account of his many voyages to the East, has a good deal to say about Abyssinia where he travelled, traded, and pursued historical enquiry about the middle of the sixth century after Christ. He is an earnest, accurate and entertaining writer save when he indulges in theological digressions; but it is worth while suffering these for the occasional excellence of his descriptive material. It must be remembered, too, that but for his religious purposes it is unlikely that any of his great works would have been written, for he retired to a monastery in Sinai to end his years in the peaceful compilation of several geographic treatises to the greater glory of God.

Of his works there survives only his *Topographia Christiana*—that is, a Christian as opposed to a pagan design of the universe. His Geography, in which presumably he gave a more detailed account of the earth's surface, is lost together with his various treatises on the motions of the stars, his annotations of the Psalms, and his Commentary on the Song of Songs, this last a particularly unfortunate loss to the student of the legend of the Queen of Sheba, concerning which Cosmas had probably collected first hand information during his visit to the Holy City of Aksum situated just on the borders of Eritrea. Fortunately, however, it was necessary in any description of the universal scheme to include considerable mention of the earth, so the *Topographia* is fairly well supplied with geographical detail and has some extremely interesting maps.

Cosmas has been long undervalued, but for this his theological obsessions are to blame. The fate of the souls of still-born babies no longer appeals to the average reader as a fascinating problem to be solved by the nice application of logic to selected quotations from sacred sources, and when Cosmas treats of this and kindred subjects he sinks to a level of complicated absurdity which only amuses for a page or so, and then becomes tedious beyond bearing. But for those prepared to overlook both his theology and his scientific theory there is a rich reward.

Some, no doubt, will find it harder to forgive his science than his exegesis. The modern reader, for instance, will be inclined to smile indulgently at a writer who, wishing to substantiate his theory that all the earth slopes upwards to the north where a huge conical mountain is the hiding place of the sun, brings forward as conclusive evidence the fact, which he has observed in the course of his travels, that Euphrates and Tigris, rivers flowing to the southward, are swifter than the northward flowing Nile. To our minds it seems inconceivable that a geographer, capable at other times of such shrewd observations, should think of a great river as labouring uphill to its mouth, but before Cosmas is dismissed as a humbug there is one point which must be urged in his favour. He states quite frankly that he has never seen a unicorn.

Now this is a notable admission, for it suggests that Cosmas sticks to facts. After all, it is facts which we want from our ancient geographers and historians. Their theories may be ludicrous, but that is unimportant by comparison if only the facts which they have collected are right. Cosmas believed with a passionate certainty that the earth was flat, and considered the pagan Ptolemy, also a citizen of Alexandria, a blasphemous fool for suggesting that it was round and that the path of the sun encircled it. This must detract from the reputation of Cosmas as a philosopher, but it makes very little difference to his usefulness. What the historian needs is not philosophy but plentiful and accurate detail, and when a monk

of the Dark Ages, with his reputation as a traveller to uphold, is careful enough of the truth to admit that he has never seen a unicorn, this must be considered as splendid testimony to his reliability.

In fact, the picture which Cosmas gives of the Abyssinia of that day, can be accepted as true in all essentials; and it is this which makes his works so important, since but for them we should know practically nothing of the vast trade which, with Rome as its main base, connected the whole Mediterranean seaboard with India, Africa, Socotra and Ceylon, using for this purpose the ships of Abyssinia.

For it is quite clear from the manner in which Cosmas refers to his voyages that he was no Columbus discovering new worlds but simply a trader, one of many, who followed established routes in pursuit of normal commerce.

He describes the huge palace of the King of Abyssinia with four great towers and statues of unicorns cunningly wrought in bronze. He describes the great city of Aksum, more than one hundred miles inland from its port, Adulis, and was, he says, the honoured guest of the Governor of that port. He was consulted in the matter of some ancient inscriptions (of which, unfortunately, the modern explorers have found no trace) and actually went on an expedition in search of them. Interest in archaeology and learned dispute concerning it, for it is clear there was much considered argument, indicate a very high level of culture. And indeed the general picture is one of great peace and prosperity, trade being extensive and well organised, currency soundly managed, and justice adequately administered over a large area.

Diplomatic exchanges with the great ports of the Mediterranean appear to have been frequent, the country was considered a valuable ally against the non-Christian peoples of Yemen, and as an important stage on the sea route to the Indies was able to extract considerable wealth from the trade in spices and silks.

But it was not only to India and Ceylon that the traders



went. Cosmas describes far stranger journeyings in which he himself played an honourable part.

The King of Aksum, he tells us, sent every year a well-equipped trading fleet to bargain with the people of Barbary. This term, from the Greek barbaroi—literally the people whose speech sounded “bar . . . bar . . . bar”—is used of almost any tribe of lesser civilisation and must not be confused with its later uses in the Mediterranean. The Barbary coast of the Abyssinians was almost certainly Italian Somaliland, probably the southern and more fertile parts.

Five hundred men would set out on these expeditions. As they rounded Cape Gardafui, they were careful not to be caught by the great currents which would sweep them south into the “unnavigable oceans.” . . . This actually happened once to Cosmas, whose ship was driven so far off her course that he gave himself up for lost. He records that a huge bird was sighted over the sea—no doubt, an albatross, from which it seems likely that he was indeed carried several hundred miles to the south and was in considerable danger.

But this was only one of the many perils which these traders had to encounter. When they landed on the coast of Sasu “on the edge of the Great Ocean,” there was a long journey inland to the “Land of Gold.” The three chief products with which they traded were cattle, salt and iron, all of which they exchanged for lumps of gold which the natives mined, where and how they were never able to discover. Driving their cattle before them and labouring under their heavy loads the expedition would push on through the wild and inhospitable country until they reached the established rendezvous. Here a strange method of trade was employed, the reasons for which are easily imagined. Arrived at the level ground where the bargaining was to be conducted, the traders would advance cautiously and place their salt, iron or beef wherever convenient—often, says Cosmas, on thorns. The traders then retired into safety and the natives,

emerging from concealment, would bring their lumps of gold, placing the amount of it they were willing to pay on or beside any 'lot' they wanted. They then went back to hiding and it was the custom for the merchants to come forward to value the offers. If they took the gold and left the goods that meant that they were satisfied; but if they considered that more gold was necessary they retired having touched nothing. It was then for the natives either to place more gold on the various piles until the traders were satisfied or to take back their gold as a sign that they were calling off the negotiations. This bargaining went on for several days, though rarely more than five. Then came the dash back to the coast with the bartered gold. Even in the matter of fact phrases of the shrewd old merchant turned monk it is possible to feel the fear which possessed all members of the expedition that robbers or other disaster might rob them of their hard-won gains. Trade was indeed an adventure in those times, and it is impossible not to feel respect for Cosmas, the sturdy adventurer, who, though plagued by poor sight and terrible digestive miseries (for which dysentery was doubtless a good deal to blame) travelled, and bargained, and nosed into all sorts of strange places, and then placed his doings on record in honour of the God in whom he so devoutly believed.

Cosmas retired to his Sinaian monastery in A.D. 549. His muddled thinking and preoccupation with non-essentials are typical of the state of learning at that time. Alexandria, once the centre of the world's intellectual activity, the city of the great Museum of the Ptolemies and of the first great scientific library of the human race, had become a hive of petty and bickering theologians. Cosmas was a victim of the prevailing infection, and he would not merit further mention here were it not that in his *Topographia* the Tabernacle of Moses plays a prominent part.

Cosmas believed, and he was not alone in this, that the Tabernacle was more than a shrine, that it was, in



fact, in its construction a model of the entire Universe. Ideas of this kind were not new, for the Egyptians had often held that their temples were models of the world, but never had this type of theory been worked out with such fantastic logic as when Cosmas set himself to prove it by detailed demonstration. The table of shewbread surrounded by a waved border was the earth surrounded by the ocean. The ocean, on which only Noah had sailed led to the Earthly Paradise where the sons of men lived before the Flood. From this abode rose the walls of Heaven, the north and south walls curving to meet in a high vault. On a gallery in this vault lay Heaven itself.

Since the dimensions of the scheme are such that the enclosed space is twice as long east to west as broad north to south, this plan of the universe has been jocularly described as resembling a lady's trunk with a rounded lid and with a top shelf inside it. Cosmas himself says that it is all very like the Public Baths.

The whole Ptolemaic conception of the universe was anathema to Cosmas, but what shocked him most was the idea that the heavenly bodies moved of their own accord. It is clear from his vehemence that the idea of an automatic universe frightened him badly. That way lay madness. His scheme required the assistance of angels in pushing the stars round their courses, and he felt much safer when stellar motion was thus provided for; though it never occurred to him that this condemnation of the angelic creatures to perpetual hard labour was surely a little unfair.

But it is not these astronomical speculations of Cosmas that make his narrative of value here, though it was impossible without them to give a true picture of the man. What lends his theory interest is that it explains the great veneration with which the Ark of the Covenant is guarded by the Ethiopian Church to-day.

By giving into the hands of His Church a mystic model of the world God gave them the power to conquer. The

Ethiopian Church considers that the Ark guards the fate of their country. While it is in their possession they cannot be conquered. Lesser arks are taken into battle to encourage the soldiers, but the true Ark is hidden where no invader can find it. The taking of the Holy City of Aksum means nothing so long as the Ark of the Covenant is saved.

This the Emperor Haile Selassie has sworn to guard with his life. He and his chieftains are pledged by the most sacred oaths to perish to the last man rather than let the sacred symbol pass into the hands of an invader.

The Legend of the Ark of the Covenant is one of the great stories on which the Ethiopian faith is founded. There is another legend, hardly less remarkable, with which Abyssinian history is inextricably mingled. . . . The Story of Presbyter John.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LEGEND OF PRESTER JOHN

ON May 7th, 1487, two travellers left the town of Santarem in Portugal on a dangerous and secret mission which had been entrusted to them at their suggestion by John II of Portugal, in whose service they had been for some years. They were Pedro de Covilham (sometimes known as Pero Covilha), a diplomat of some distinction, who had spent much of his life in the courts of Castille and had only returned to his native Portugal on the outbreak of war with Spain; and Alfonso de Payva, who had won no little fame both as a merchant and as a soldier and was a trusted friend of the king.

They were under orders to explore "the Levant, and all those regions of Africa and Asia thereto adjoining" for the purpose of discovering possibilities for the extension of their country's trade. They were to seek with especial care for those lands where "cinnamon and like spices" were to be found; and they were also charged to discover with God's aid the kingdom of Prester John.

Before we follow these two brave men on their scarcely credible adventures—for they rank almost with the Polos in the romantic daring with which they faced the unknown—some account had best be given of this strange Emperor whose land they were seeking. For they were not alone in their quest. Bartholomew Diaz had been sent on the same mission. He was to discover a sea route to Prester John's country while Covilham and de Payva were to travel overland.

To-day Prester John is almost always referred to as a legendary character, but it by no means follows that he

never existed. In one of his most illuminating flashes, G. K. Chesterton warns his readers not to confuse the legendary with the mythical. Most people, he says, think that Hengist and Horsa existed while King Arthur and his Knights did not. They base this opinion on the fact that all the details on record concerning the two petty chiefs are ordinary and quite credible, while a good many of the stories that have been written about King Arthur are clearly colossal lies.

But does this prove that King Arthur never existed? On the contrary, says G. K. Chesterton, it merely proves that while Hengist and Horsa were such ordinary fellows that no one ever thought it worth while to lie about them, King Arthur was so great a man that for centuries after his death any story-teller with a bigger lie than usual to tell naturally took the Arthurian story as a suitable setting for his large-scale mendacity.

Accepting this theory, which is at least a useful corrective to the attitude adopted by so many historians when they are faced by a legend, it soon becomes clear that if the size of the lies inspired by his memory is a measure of Prester John's reality he must have been very real indeed.

The whole story starts with the appearance before Pope Calixtus II in the early part of the twelfth century of an Oriental ecclesiastic concerning whose credentials only the most meagre and puzzling details are available. In the account of one chronicler he appears as 'John, the patriarch of the Indians,' while another reference describes him as an Archbishop of India. Now it is quite possible that this strange figure may have come from India, and it is also possible that he was a complete imposter, a suggestion rendered more probable by some of the stories which he is alleged to have told. It might be credited, for instance, that miraculous cures had taken place at the shrine of "St. Thomas" in India, but it is hard to believe that the saint rose from the dead and distributed the sacramental wafer with his own hands.

It is some years before there is any further mention of any priestly character from the East with the name of John, and then the story appears in much more circumstantial form in the chronicle of Otto, Bishop of Freisingen, who states that while he was at Rome attending the papal court in the year 1145 he met with a Bishop of Gabala who had a remarkable story to tell. This story was to the effect that in the regions beyond Persia and Armenia there reigned John, a Christian monarch, *rex et sacerdos*, who not many years before had made war on the pagan nations surrounding him and had won many notable victories. Presbyter John, as he was called, was a Nestorian—the significance of which statement we must return to later—and he had hoped to advance on the holy city of Jerusalem to fight for the Christian Church. When he had reached the Tigris, however, he had found it impossible to get his huge army across. Hearing that to the northward the river froze in winter he had marched many miles along the bank in that direction, but having waited several winters for the frost to come he was at length compelled to return to his own country.

In seeking for the motive which prompted the telling of this curious tale it must not be forgotten that the bishopric of Gabala was in Syria, the birthplace of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, whose doctrine that God could not be born from a human being and that therefore the Virgin Mary could not be the Mother of God, had divided the whole Christian Church in the early part of the fifth century and had, as we have seen, been denounced as erroneous at the rowdy Synod of Ephesus in A.D. 431. The vanquished Nestorians had nevertheless managed to spread their doctrines through the east and had established themselves as a powerful and tolerated minority among the peoples of Islam, which position they still held in the early twelfth century, the time of the Bishop of Gabala's narrative. Doubtless the Bishop had Nestorian sympathies and thus was attracted by the tale of a powerful army under a

Nestorian emperor hovering in the background at a time when it was clear that the gains of the first Crusade had to a large extent been lost, so that a second Crusade was already contemplated to restore them. This army of Presbyter John was a powerful argument in favour of concessions to the Nestorian point of view.

But whether the Bishop of Gabala was an astute intriguer spreading the tale for purposes of his own or whether he was merely a good fellow with an excellent taste in tall stories, the fact remains that as soon as Otto of Freisingen quoted him the ball was set rolling and the legend of Presbyter John began to grow.

In 1165 comes the next chapter in the queer business. A letter is passed round among the Christian churches addressed to Manuel, Emperor of Byzantium, and supposedly sent by Presbyter John—"Presbyter Joannes, by the power and virtue of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of Lords."

This letter, though obviously a fraud, is a remarkable document. Presbyter John claims to be the mightiest emperor in the world, ruling over no fewer than seventy-two lesser monarchs whose kingdoms extend to farthest India ("where lies the body of St. Thomas"), to the mountains where the sun rises and to the ruins of Babylon and the tower of Babel. When he goes to war thirteen huge crosses made of gold and all inlaid with precious stones are carried before him on great wagons, and behind each of these strange standards follow ten thousand knights and ten times that number of footmen. Seven kings wait on him at one time, together with sixty dukes and 365 counts. When he sits in state there are twelve archbishops on his right hand and twenty bishops on his left. In a huge mirror set up on a pedestal before his tremendous palace he can observe all that takes place in every part of his dominions. If any conspire against him he straightway discerns them in the mirror and is able to forestall their plots. There is not in all his territories any man in poverty; nor is there any miser. There

are no thieves, no liars, no rebels; neither does any man flatter another. Vices there are none.

Do you ask why, though ruling in such magnificence, he styles himself only 'presbyter'? That is his humility. Besides, he adds with delightful naïveté, since his lord chamberlain is a king and his head cook a bishop he can hardly take a rank comparable with these!

The Emperor Manuel (whose long and dazzling but highly unprofitable reign was spent mostly in war) was presumably too busy fighting against Raymond of Antioch and the Turks of Iconium, or in joining with Amalric of Jerusalem in an attack on Egypt, to pay much attention to this letter even if it reached him; but the Pope Alexander III apparently answered it, though it is difficult to be sure of this. This much is certain—in September, 1177, the Pope, who was at Venice, addressed a letter to "Our dearest son in Christ, John, the illustrious and magnificent, King of all the Indies."

From the text of this letter it appears that one Philip, physician to the Pope, while travelling in the east had met certain other travellers who had told him that they came from a Christian kingdom beyond the great deserts. That the Pope considered the monarch of this kingdom to be the writer of the famous letter of 'Presbyter Joannes,' is held by some students of the matter to be extremely probable since Alexander gives a solemn warning against boastfulness to his royal correspondent!

It is hard to believe that the able and clear thinking Pope, who outmanœuvred the great Barbarossa, caused Henry II of England to do penance for the death of Thomas à Becket, laid the foundations of the system of voting by which the Pontiff is to-day elected, did not hesitate to apply the dreaded interdict to Scotland, and intrigued in masterly fashion against the anti-pope Innocent III set up by his enemies, should have been deceived by the faked Prester John letter. Probably he wrote his reply in much the same spirit as that in which the Chinese sage is said to have prayed—if there were

any Gods it was just as well and if there were not it didn't matter; but assuming that the letter was sent in all seriousness the question arises where could it possibly have been sent?

There appears to be no reason to doubt that the physician Philip was telling the truth, in which case it seems only right to assume that however much they may have exaggerated, those with whom he had spoken concerning the Christian monarch, were really the subjects of such a ruler. They are even described as 'honourable persons' who had some sort of authority to speak for their king. They had said that he wished to be re-united with the Catholic Church and that he wished for a church to be erected in his name at Rome and an altar to be set aside for him at the Holy Sepulchre. They can hardly have been Nestorians, and the only other possibility is that they were members of the Ethiopic Church, natives of Abyssinia.

This is all the more likely when it is recalled that confusion between Ethiopia and India was common still in Europe and had been since before the time of Virgil, who is several times guilty of that error. Doubtless Alexander III had the haziest notions of geography, but the King of Abyssinia was the only possible person to whom he could have sent his letter.

But the spurious Prester John letter with its catalogue of marvels had captured the imagination of Europe. It was copied with all sorts of embroideries and several versions of it exist in old German verse. It definitely pointed to Asia as the land of Prester John, and it was several hundred years before the dream of a great Asiatic Christian kingdom vanished from European minds.

Other amazing things were told of the great Prester John. His wealth came from mines so rich that the mind of man could scarce picture them. Out of a magic mountain within his territories a river of rubies flowed, the precious stones so thickly clustering that from afar it seemed the mountain bled. Gold was so common



none considered it. Serpents had emerald eyes. The king hunted not lions but dragons, protected from their breath by robes of salamander skin. In these he passed through fire to the amazement of all beholders.

The legend of the salamander, the lizard that lives in flame, is one of the strangest stories that the human mind has produced. But the robes of salamander skin are thought by some students of the eastern myths to have perhaps a rational explanation. It is related that Charlemagne had a magic tablecloth which when soiled by a feast was flung into the fire and emerged unharmed and cleansed. Guests, it is said, were stricken dumb with wonder at this marvel. This could only be asbestos—which an ancient historian refers to as “Carpasian linen”—the fibrous mineral found at Carpasius in the isle of Cyprus. It is unlikely that this was found in the realm of Prester John, for it is not a common deposit; but every marvel of fact or imagination seems at one time or another to have clustered round the Presbyter’s name.

In Ethiopia the story takes curious forms having been heard perhaps from European sources. But it is part of the national tradition, and the king is always thought of as a conqueror who leads his Christian subjects against the infidel, seated upon a white horse and preceded by the Holy Cross.

Early in the thirteenth century there was a rumour that David, grandson of Prester John, had risen against the Moslems and was destroying their hold upon the East. It was a pleasant thought to the Europeans that their hated enemies were being taken in the rear. The origin of the rumour was, however, the colossal achievements of Jenghis Khan, who, when he died in 1227, ruled a vast Empire which extended from the Caspian to the Pacific. Jenghis Khan was no Christian, but it was his fixed rule to respect religious beliefs and he never made war in the name of any creed. There were pagans, Christians and Moslems among his counsellors, and he dealt fairly with them all. The Christians were Nestorians,

but they had changed so much in character with the passing of the years that at the time of Jenghis Khan they had little if anything in common with the West. They were excellent fighters, but far from aiding in the defence of the Holy Sepulchre would probably have been only too delighted to have pillaged all Europe. They had neither any central church nor any demarcated territory, and though their existence contributed to the Prester John legend, so that Marco Polo identified him as Unc Khan, forerunner of the great Jenghis, they were never a nation in any real sense of the word. They disappeared almost completely from Central Asia by the close of the fourteenth century, only surviving in India, where under the name of Syriac Christians they still exist to-day.

The existence of these Syriac Christians in India probably explains the identity of the Archbishop John who appeared before Calixtus II. Cosmas Indicopleustes (whose works we have already considered) mentions that he found them in Ceylon as early as 535. But they were not even a separate people, let alone a great nation, and there is little in their history to give any grounds for the magnificent legends concerning Prester John, though perhaps the tales of Golconda and Gondophar have been borrowed by romance.

As Asia was gradually penetrated and her secrets in part revealed it became more and more difficult to name any real king east of the Oxus as the legendary monarch. For a while the Turkish Christians, the Keraites, were considered to be his nation, but during the confused struggles which marked the reign of the great Asiatic conqueror Timur, this people, sometimes mentioned as being led by Prester John, were overwhelmed and their identity completely submerged. Marco Polo says that the descendants of Prester John drifted north and settled beyond Peking, but it is difficult to understand what basis of fact explains this story. Friar Odoric, who reached Peking about the year 1325 by way of Persia, India, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Canton, states that on his return journey

(through Central Asia) he passed through the Land of Prester John, of which he gives a description; but there is nothing of special magnificence recorded and it is probable that Odoric had no real evidence for his statement. This is the last trace of an Asiatic Prester John, though as late as 1492 Martin Behaim, who, on the strength of rather vague stories of his travels, was commissioned by his fellow townsmen of Nuremberg to construct a globe, labels a somewhat indeterminate region between Tibet and India with the words 'Prister Johan.' This is, however, only one of Martin Behaim's many flights of imagination and has no significance. Blank spaces had to be filled in somehow.

Although Marco Polo went so far astray in his placing of the elusive kingdom of Prester John, he provides elsewhere in his writings an interesting clue as to the real source of all the stories, for he states that about the year 1270 the King of Abyssinia sent ambassadors to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem to make offerings on his behalf. This is clear evidence that the Ethiopic Church of that day considered itself as bound to Western Christendom, and there is no reason to doubt that the emissaries whom Philip the Physician encountered a century earlier were from the same kingdom.

Gradually Abyssinia becomes the land of Prester John. One of the old maps (Fra Mauro: 1460) pictures a great city in that region. Here, says the rubric, Preste Janni has his royal palace. Thus it was towards Abyssinia that Pedro de Covilham and his companion, the envoys of John II of Portugal, made their secret journey.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PORTUGUESE ADVENTURERS

THE two explorers went first to Barcelona from where they obtained passage to Naples. They had discussed their plans in great detail before starting and were careful to let no other travellers suspect their real mission. Thus at Naples they gave out that they were going to Rhodes, and did in fact take ship for that lovely island. There they were able to evade the attentions of their travelling companions and joined a merchant vessel bound for Alexandria. They did not stay long in that city but made their way to Cairo, a centre of Mohammedan trading interests, and here they struck up a friendship with some Moorish traders from Fez who were about to start south along the Red Sea.

The Moors were experienced merchant adventurers, men of intrepid temperament and high commercial principles. The party travelled easily and in harmony and at length De Covilham and his companion came to Aden, where the Indian Ocean lay before them. Here there was some little discussion as to what course they should take, and at length it was decided that they should separate. The chief aim of their journey was to collect information and this end could best be served by their investigating commercial possibilities in different directions.

Alfonso de Payva went first to Sofala where he had heard there were excellent gold mines and then turned northward into the unknown regions of Abyssinia; while De Covilham explored the Indian seas in search of trade.

De Covilham made a very successful voyage and gathered a great many valuable facts concerning the

markets of the Indies, noting down carefully the various spices which were to be had and stressing the superiority of certain types of product over others. Calicut he especially commended as a port where good business might be done in cloves and cinnamon and pepper, and he observed the various methods by which merchants of different nationalities endeavoured to pack these commodities so as to conserve their virtues.

But he not only interested himself in merchandise. Trade routes were always in his mind. By listening carefully to the tales of various navigators he obtained conclusive evidence that it was possible to sail to India by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and he actually constructed a map to show how this might be done.

"First you shall set your course for the Island of the Moon," he wrote—he was referring to Sofala, the modern Madagascar—"from where it is possible to strike a good course for Calicut."

Having satisfied himself that his work was well done De Covilham turned back towards the Red Sea and at last reached Cairo, where it had been arranged that either of the travellers who arrived first should await the other. It was not long before there came news of De Payva's death. He had been killed somewhere in the deserts of southern Abyssinia, but details were lacking. De Covilham was in a quandary. He felt bound to go in search of his friend, but it was also his duty to send the information he had gathered back to his king.

Fortunately at this juncture he met two envoys of John of Portugal who had been sent to look for him. They were two Jewish travellers of humble birth, a Rabbi and a shoemaker, Joseph of Lamego. The shoemaker was sent back with the results of De Covilham's voyages and the two other men set off once more for Aden and Ormuz.

But now that his work in the direction of the Indies was done, De Covilham felt drawn towards the mysterious Land of Prester John or 'Ogani' where his friend had perished, and at length he set out alone to settle once

and for all the question of what lay beyond the deserts of the Red Sea's western shore. Having first reached Mecca, the holy city of Arabia, he crossed the Red Sea to the port of Zeila, and from there made his way inland.

But the king who ruled the Land of Prester John, though he treated him with the utmost courtesy, found him of such assistance by reason of his western knowledge that he refused to let him leave, so that for thirty years he was in a position of honourable detention at the Ethiopian capital.

He reached the heart of Ethiopia about the year 1490 and it was not till 1520 that he was to see a fellow European. In that year a Portuguese embassy arrived, the Negus having sent a young Armenian by the name of Matthew to solicit aid against the Mohammedans. Since he left in 1507 and returned only in 1520 it can well be imagined that De Covilham had given up all hope. He was overjoyed to see his fellow-countrymen again and wept as he embraced them. He had much to tell, and all who heard him marvelled at the grace and vividness of his narrative, but he left no written record and it is on the account prepared by Father Alvarez, one of the envoys, that our information of Abyssinia at this period depends. This priest returned to Portugal after a seven years' residence in Ethiopia, and his book "True Facts concerning the Land of Prester John" contains much of interest, though it reveals a constant state of war against Islam which had prevented any real progress in knowledge and civilisation.

Of absorbing interest is the holy Father's account of the huge monoliths of Aksum and of the rock-hewn churches. His account of the greatest of the monoliths is as follows:

"Above the town there are many stones standing erect, though some others have fallen on the ground. . . . The greatest raised stone is 64 ells in length and six wide and the sides measure three ells. It is worked like an altar stone, very straight and skilfully made with arcades below and a summit like a half-moon, and the side which has

this half-moon is towards the south. . . . And that it may not be said how can a stone so high be measured I have already said that it was all in arcades as far as the foot of the half moon and these are all of a size. We measured those we could reach and by this means calculated the others and we found sixty ells and we allowed four more for the half moon. . . .”

Father Alvarez was a methodical observer but he could unearth no information as to the origin of these great monuments, of which there were more than thirty, though only one of any size was still in position. Of their inscriptions he could make nothing.

Later research has established that they were sacrificial stones, and indeed the channels to draw off the blood of the victims to the sacred bowls are still in evidence. It is also clear that they indicate sun-worship—an interesting fact when we remember that the legend of the Queen of Sheba speaks of the worship of the sun. It is possible that these are relics of the splendours of her kingdom. Some writers have suggested that ‘Queen of the South’ may have meant ‘Queen of the Sun.’

Shortly after the return of Alvarez came the invasion of Mahommed Gran of which mention has already been made. Gran, the Left-handed, made terrible inroads upon Ethiopia, and the Emperor appealed to the Portuguese who very generously sent a fleet to Massawa to render assistance. In 1542 Stephen de Gama sent his young brother Christopher with troops into the interior. After a bitter struggle the combined Christian forces routed Mahommed Gran, but not before the courageous young commander had been killed in battle.

The reputation which the Portuguese now enjoyed in Ethiopia was at once made the occasion by the Jesuits to send numerous missions to the country. The story of their efforts need not be told in detail. They were brave but for the most part tactless and narrow-sighted men who were unable to perceive any good in native doctrines and sought only by every means in their power to make con-

verts. To do this they frequently aided rebel emperors in return for a promise that the rebel if successful would set up a Catholic Church. This led to much unnecessary bloodshed and in the end the indignant Ethiopians forced the Jesuits to leave. To be just it must be admitted that these missionaries were single-minded men who had no thought but for their faith and never schemed to obtain power for personal ends. Nor did they aim at the destruction of Ethiopian independence. But like so many good men acting in misguided fashion from sincere principles they did great and enduring harm. One of the Fathers, Pedro Paez, who reached Abyssinia early in the seventeenth century, made very great progress through his skill as an adviser on all civil matters and his ability to avoid undue wounding of the feelings of those with whom he disagreed. Traces of his work still remain in Abyssinia, for he aided in the construction of roads and bridges. Had he lived the conversion of Ethiopia to Christianity in its western form might have proved possible, but the intolerance of his successors destroyed the foundations which he had laid so well.

By 1623 the Jesuits had been for the most part expelled and in the succeeding two hundred years life in Ethiopia was little affected by any western influence. Travellers were slowly exploring the sources of the Nile and diplomats were manoeuvring for position, but of these matters the people of Ethiopia knew little. Two rival kingdoms existed and there were constant struggles between them. Usurpers were frequent. But one point is of great interest—the people always swung back to the ruler who could show true descent from Solomon, whose name remained a word to conjure with. At length a chief of humble origin seized the throne of Amhara and during a long and exciting reign eventually established himself sole ruler of Ethiopia. He was King Theodore, whose death, which resulted from a British expedition, was a tragedy of madness and misunderstanding almost Greek in its intensity of horror.



## CHAPTER X

### KING THEODORE

So much of a confusing nature has been written about King Theodore, against whom the British were compelled to send an expedition, the astonishing success of which must remain one of the luckiest triumphs in military history—though to say this, as will be seen later, is to reflect no discredit on the brilliant commander who undertook the task—that it seems best to me to allow my father, who was an eye-witness of the whole tragedy, to tell the story in his own words. What follows, therefore, is a condensed but in every essential an entirely unaltered account of what occurred, the work of a man who was among the strange King's greatest friends.

John Bell, of whom mention is made, was my grandfather—an Englishman who, having penetrated Ethiopia at a time when it was practically a closed country, lived on there, rising to high rank. His adventures, of which no really adequate account exists, must have ranked with those of Lawrence of Arabia—to whom he bore a strong resemblance in that his powers of endurance and the sureness of his word won the hearts of a people little given to the welcome of foreigners. He was killed in a skirmish with rebels, for, seeing the king in danger, he rode madly to the rescue and cut the assailant down, only to be killed in turn by a second rebel who was following the first. This man the king himself killed, and then seeing that the friend whom he loved above all other men lay stricken down, leaped from his horse to aid him. But John Bell was dead, and from that moment King Theodore acted like a man accursed.

Here is my father's story, taken from his letters and his writings:

King Theodore in the commencement of his reign had two good angels. The first was his wife and the second his prime minister, an Englishman named John Bell. He had been appointed Lika Marquas—'next to the highest,' and was trusted implicitly.<sup>1</sup> The Queen, according to the Abyssinian custom, took great care of the King's food. He was not allowed to accept anything to eat or drink from any hand but hers, and she was wise enough to keep him continually sober, saying, "A king has too much to do to drink intoxicating liquors." She also read the Bible with him thus seeking to inspire him with the fear of God.

John Bell advised the King not only for the internal welfare of his kingdom but also concerning his relations with foreign powers. But the Queen died, and John Bell was killed in battle defending the King. And there was no one to take the place of either.

Then the King married the daughter of King Ubie of Tigre, but she did not care for him as the former Queen had done. And thus the King grew displeased and gave way to intoxicating drink and began to care for other women, though not to the extent which was reported of him by his enemies.

It was in the year 1862 that the English consul came to Abyssinia—Captain Cameron, accompanied by his secretary, a Frenchman named Bardel. The King received the two diplomatists with honour and sent them back to Europe with letters which he asked them to deliver personally. But Captain Cameron, after accepting a handsome present from the King for his expenses, went to Egypt and posted his letter from there. He then went on a shooting trip, certain that in due course a reply would come. But by an accident which has never been explained the letter was overlooked by the British Foreign Office. Captain Cameron had to return without a reply and to admit that he had

<sup>1</sup> The rank of Lika Marquas was indeed a high honour. The officer who held it wore royal dress so as to deceive the enemy in battle.

not gone to England in person. King Theodore was offended.

Meanwhile, a French consul who had had a dispute with the King left the country and wrote an insulting letter. Just at this time a Dr. Stern, of the Jewish Mission to the Falashas, angered the King by breaches of Court etiquette. While he was detained under guard he summoned the French Consul, M. Bardel (who had now returned to take the place of his colleague who had written the insulting letter), and asked that a book among his belongings should be hidden, since it contained passages which would anger the King.

But M. Bardel took the book, *Wanderings among the Falashas*, translated the offending passages, and brought them to King Theodore's notice, with disastrous results.

Here was a typical passage: "King Theodore is not a descendant of the Royal House, but the son of a poor woman who sold herbal medicines. He is a cruel, blood-thirsty man, like a wild animal."

To the King, who was exasperated by having no letter as yet from England, this was the last straw. He ordered the Europeans to be brought in chains before him. Then in a loud voice he said:

"You Europeans came into this country and I loved, honoured and respected you, because I thought that all Europeans were like my beloved John Bell, who spoke always the truth. But you are liars. You have spoken and written against me, and have given me a bad name before the world. Now God shall judge between you and me."

Then, in front of thousands of people, the Feta Negast, or Abyssinian Codex, was opened and a law was found by which all men who spoke ill of the king must suffer death. Dr. Stern and his companion, a Mr. Rosenthal, were condemned to execution and the gallows was erected before their eyes.

As I was in favour with the King I knelt and begged him with tears in my eyes to spare them. . . . He answered

at length: "Don't be afraid, my friend, my son. For your sake and for the memory of Mr. Bell I will not kill them. Not only will I grant you Stern's life, but even if you ask a finger off my hand I will give it you, for you have dealt truly with me and I love you."

But though their lives were spared, Captain Cameron, Dr. Stern, Mr. Rosenthal, together with other Europeans, were put in chains.

The English Government, thoroughly alarmed at the news, sent a Mr. Rassam to negotiate the release of the captives. He came and presented an official letter from Queen Victoria to King Theodore, which said that full confidence might be placed in him. The king treated the envoy with great magnificence, but a wrong translation of the letter gave him the idea that Mr. Rassam was to remain as hostage and adviser.

The prisoners were handed over to him and he prepared to leave the country. I pointed out that the King expected him to remain, but he thought it of no consequence. The King let them start, but suddenly changed his mind and sent after them. They were all imprisoned, and so were my wife and myself.

This was all due to misunderstanding, for King Theodore had a great personal liking for Mr. Rassam, who had treated him with great tact and dignity. But he should not have left with the prisoners.

Everything had been taken from us; we were as beggars. Then one day the King said to me: "You Europeans are clever, but you conceal your talents. Now I want you to make me a gun which will discharge a ball one thousand pounds in weight. If you say you do not know how, I shall know that you are liars and that you seek to deceive me."

I was sadly perplexed for I knew nothing of such things and the thought that if I failed the King might take vengeance on all the prisoners was terrible to me. However, there was nothing for it but at least to try so I asked that the other prisoners should be liberated to help me.

This was granted. Luckily though I knew nothing of the procedure, I had with me my *Polytechnic Lexicon*, and in this I found valuable information, so that at last the furnaces were built.

The King came several times daily to watch us but all the while I spoke to him I was inwardly fearful that his blood lust would break out. He had been massacring his subjects right and left and it seemed that no day could pass without the shedding of blood. When all was ready for the casting the people assembled in their thousands to watch. When I saw that the metal was at the right heat I asked King Theodore to give the word for the furnace to be opened. This was done and the shining metal flowed out into the mould which we had prepared. In twenty minutes it was full, and the King was glad, saying that the gun should be called 'Sebastopol.' Three days later the mould was opened and the metal was found well cast. Since there was no shot big enough, the gun was never used, but the making of it undoubtedly saved the lives of the prisoners, since they were spared, in the face of much opposition from some of the chiefs, in order to build a road to take the great monster to the hills.

Meanwhile the relief expedition had reached Zullu near Massawa. We were made to work hard on the building of a great wagon to carry the cannon. We had to work very hard, and when the first part of our work was done the chiefs advised the King to kill us since our usefulness was ended. But we were still needed for road work. It took eight hundred men to drag the huge gun up to Magdala.

At length General Napier's force arrived and a messenger brought to the king a letter, but he refused to receive it, saying that he would die fighting and that nothing could change his mind. He gave absolution to his chiefs, since the Abuna was dead, and ordered the attack. This was a failure. Firing six volleys to the minute the English soldiers mowed down the seven hundred natives who

rushed upon them. The native artillery proved useless. One of the guns burst.

That night the King called me and said that he would send a message urging conciliation. This was done and a reply was received on the following afternoon.

“To His Majesty King Theodore,

“Your Majesty fought yesterday like a brave man but you were conquered by our arts and power. We trust that no more blood will be shed between us. If, therefore, your Majesty will submit to the Queen of England and bring all the Europeans who are in your Majesty’s hands and deliver them safely this day into the British camp, I will guarantee honourable treatment for yourself and all the members of your Majesty’s family.

“Signed by the Commander-in-Chief,

“ROBERT NAPIER.”

“What is the meaning of honourable treatment?” cried the King. “I know—it means to treat me as a prisoner. I, Theodore, a prisoner. That shall never be.”

He attempted then and there to kill himself but was restrained by the chiefs who begged him to slaughter the Europeans. One said—“Let us put them in a great hut with wood and straw and burn them alive.” Another: “Let us cut off their hands and feet and let the English carry them away.” A third: “Let us hang them all on that tree.” All these counsels, and worse, I heard.

At last the King sent for us. It seemed that the end had come. But looking at us fixedly he was silent for several minutes and then pronounced that we should go free. “My death is near at hand,” he said, “and I would not have you precede me to God’s presence with your accusations. Go, get your friends together and make your way, all of you, to the English camp.”

Lord Napier received us cordially. We were still anxious, however, since there were nine other Europeans

in Theodore's hands. April the twelfth was Easter Day, and according to Abyssinian custom cows and sheep were slaughtered for a feast. A letter arrived for the Commander-in-Chief asking that he would accept 1000 cows and 500 sheep as a token of peace and friendship. The King was told by Mr. Rassam's dragoman that when all the Europeans were safe the gift would be received with thankfulness. They were released at once. When I went to claim my dear wife and family I took leave of the King who said, with tears in his eyes: "Farewell, dear friend—I loved thee as I loved John Bell."

The next day the fortress of Magdala was stormed. When he saw his men running away King Theodore replied to his armour-bearer who had urged surrender: "Let us not fall into men's hands—they have no pity. Let us fall into God's hand." He then took his pistol and shot himself through the head, falling dead to the ground. Within fifteen minutes the English soldiers had won the fortress and Sir Robert Napier, Mr. Rassam and I stood by the dead body, which I was called on to identify. The English flag was then hoisted on Magdala, which fort was later blown up by powder and utterly destroyed.

The stirring events of these days filled the world with wonderful news. VICTORY OF BRITISH EXPEDITION . . . IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS TAKEN . . . MAGDALA DESTROYED . . . ALL PRISONERS SAVED. . . . Let me say the truth about these things. There was very little skill shown by the British and little to admire in their warlike proceedings. Had King Theodore not concentrated his forces at Magdala, where he was surrounded by enemies in his own kingdom, and had his men not forsaken him at the critical hour, the British soldiers, for all their bravery, must have been massacred to a man. Just as the Egyptian army under European officers was annihilated in 1877 by King John of Abyssinia, and Hicks Pasha's army utterly destroyed in Kordofan by the Mahdi's power, so must the British have perished at Magdala but that the whole country had revolted against their savage

king and so allowed the troops free passage both in and out of the land.

Besides, King Theodore was unfairly treated. By the custom of his country the acceptance of the gift was a token of peace. However, when the prisoners had been released the gift was sent back and the battle joined. Theodore considered this the treachery of an implacable enemy. Whether it was the result of misunderstanding or whether some degree of deceit was thought allowable in the exceptional circumstances and to save the captives, I do not know.

I do not judge the conduct of those concerned. It is merely my duty to tell the truth as I see it. Surely this tragic story of England's dealings with Abyssinia will be helpful to civilised Christian nations the world over; also to politicians and missions in being more careful in their dealings with the less civilised countries. I am convinced that this Anglo-Abyssinian war might have been spared, with all its bloodshed and enormous expense, by a nobler way of dealing with King Theodore, and that the prisoners might have been set at liberty without such an agony of danger, fear and perplexity.

The British army consisted of 12,000 English and Indian soldiers, 20,000 servants and porters, 8,000 camels, 12,400 mules, 8,000 oxen, 200 donkeys and 45 elephants. The organisation was excellent, the tactics would have proved less so had opposition been encountered in either direction. The time occupied was eight months, and the total expenditure £10,000,000 sterling. In the actual fighting no officer or man lost his life, but of the twenty-two soldiers wounded only twenty recovered. Sickness carried off eleven officers and 37 other ranks—a tribute to General Napier's magnificent staff work. But in considering the campaign it is important to remember that no attempt was made to conquer and occupy the land; also that resistance, which might have been terribly effective, was almost nil.



# SAHELE SELASSIE

KING OF SHOA, ADAL, GALLA AND GOURAGA

1794-1847

(had 6 sons and 11 daughters)

HAILE MELIKOT  
d. 1855

ATO SAIFU

RAS DARGE

MERED  
HAILE

WAISARO  
TANANA =  
WALDE  
MIKAEL

MENELEK II = TAITU (4th wife)  
1844-1913  
d. 1918

HAILE MARYAM

RAS MAKONNEN (d. 1901)  
married WAISARO YESHIMABE

all other issue  
died in infancy

WAISARO SHOARAGA = Ras MIKAEL = A second wife

ZAWDITU  
Empress, 1916  
d. 1930  
no issue

LIDJ YASSU  
1896-1935  
Emperor 1913;  
deposed 1916.

WAISARO SEHIN

m. 1912

WAISARO MANEN

HAILE SELASSIE I  
TAFARI MAKONNEN  
born 1894 (?)  
Regent 1917,  
Negus 1928,  
Emperor 1930.

MAMITI  
(daughter)  
1913

ASFOU WOSSEN  
(son)  
1916  
[Crown Prince]

ZENNEBE WERK  
(daughter)  
1918-1932  
m. Ras GUGSA

YESHIMABET  
(daughter)  
1920

MAKONNEN  
(son)  
1923

## CHAPTER XI

### THE EMPEROR MENELEK

The Emperor Theodore, owing largely to a series of family misfortunes, became disturbed in his reason and thus got into serious political trouble with the British Government by putting all the European residents in chains, having got the idea fixed in his mind that they were conspiring against him. Repeated requests by the British Government for the release of the prisoners having been refused the Government was forced to send an expeditionary force to release them. This would have been a very good excuse for the British to have annexed the country, but having given their word that the release of the prisoners was their only objective they immediately evacuated the country when this was achieved. Those who paint King Theodore in terrible colours must at least remember that though he killed himself he did not harm the prisoners, which, having decided on suicide he might very well have done.

After Theodore's death in 1868 it was the Emperor John who succeeded him as Emperor of Ethiopia. It was during his reign that Menelek, who first ruled under him as King of the Shoa Province, began to conceive great ambitions. It was also at this time that the Italians had been given Massawa, an Egyptian port, because the Emperor John (to whom the Egyptians had first promised it in return for his services at the relief of Kassala which was besieged by the Sudan Mahdi) had felt unable to undertake the responsibility. The Italians, having obtained a footing on the coast, immediately began to penetrate inland, and thus came constantly in contact with the Emperor John, whose trusted general Ras Alula fought them in a dozen minor engagements and always drove them back. Finding it impossible to make headway in the north the Italians began their Machiavellian tricks in the south, their victim being King Menelek of Shoa. Finding him young and ambitious to secure the Imperial crown they promised to supply him with arms so that he might defeat his suzerain and become Emperor. Being unacquainted with European diplomacy he accepted their protestations of friendship at their face value.

The Emperor John, hearing of this intrigue and of Menelek's increasing friendship with the Italian Government, wrote and told him that he

would grievously regret placing any trust in these foreigners whose only aim was to steal. But Menelek, grossly enthralled by ambition, continued his course of action, and when at length the valiant and far-seeing Emperor John was killed in battle with the Dervishes, Menelek, with Italian aid, became Emperor. In gratitude for the Italian help he handed over the northern province of Hamasen to his wily friends.

WARQNEH C. MARTIN.

MENELEK was of heavy build and slightly over six feet in height. The most attractive characteristics of his somewhat heavy features were his high philosopher's forehead and his frank and laughing eyes in which his power of clear thought was strikingly visible. His frown was terrible; but when he chose to exert his charm of manner he had a most winning personality.

His mouth and his chin indicated strength of character, and his short and rather curly beard, which he combed with the greatest care, added considerably, when he stroked it, to the general impression of affability. The lowest of his subjects could approach him; for he realised that a monarch who wins the common people has less to fear of his rivals among the aristocracy. Hence it was sometimes his practice to teach humility to his courtiers, and on one occasion, having seen a member of his body-guard, an officer of noble birth, use unnecessary roughness in clearing an old peasant woman from the royal path, he stopped his escort and directed that the noble should place the old woman upon the horse which he was riding and lead her wherever she wished to go.

It is easy to attribute such actions to oriental strategy and to say that it was the abasement of the noble which was the king's purpose rather than the helping of the old woman. But that is only part of the truth. Menelek went to church with great regularity, and frequently showed that for all his martial prowess and the fear with which he inspired his whole realm, he understood the teaching of Christ concerning humility.



TRANSLATION OF A LETTER SENT BY THE EMPEROR  
MENELEK OF ETHIOPIA TO THEOPHILUS WALDMEIER, IN  
THE YEAR 1871.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, The only true light which will never be extinguished, The only King who lives for ever and ever. To Him belongs Honour, Glory and Power for ever. *Amen.*

This letter is sent from King Menelek of Ethiopia to Mr. Waldmeier. How are you? I am, thank God, quite well. My people and my whole kingdom prosper through the mercy of God. I received your letter which caused me great pleasure. I will hear and accept your good counsel that the Gospel of Jesus Christ should be preached to the heathen nations, and I will never hinder or prevent you from proclaiming the Gospel. Two points in your letter especially gladdened my heart. The first is that the Gospel of Christ should be preached to the heathen Galla tribes, and the second is that you will bring some good artisans with you who will work for me. Now, come quickly. I give you permission to preach the Gospel among the heathens that they should be enlightened. And bring those men, and also buy me instruments for the work. I have sent for your journey the sum of one thousand dollars. Receive them from Messrs. Benden & Mayer in Aden. Send me word when and where you will come that I may receive you. I send you two copies of this letter, one by Tatschurra and the other by Aden and Massawa. When you come, come by the coast of Tatschurra. I have prepared the road, do not be afraid.

Written in Shoa in the city of Boussan, May 15th,  
1871.

Signed with the King's seal—a lion and crown  
with the sceptre.

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There was in Menelek far more than the force and cleverness of an oriental tyrant who seized by strength and held by guile the whole of modern Ethiopia. He was in some ways an idealist, and it is noteworthy that the common people revered him as their especial protector. His breadth of view was astounding when it is considered that he met civilisation only through its diplomats. He did not read a great deal but knew how to listen. And he was renowned for his prodigious memory.

History, too, attracted him. He knew how to distinguish fact from legend, and when some priestly man of letters recited to the court tales of the miraculous deeds of the saints, the king, though ever courteous in the extreme to holy men, was known to smile into his beard.

"Alas that we have no such men nowadays," he would exclaim. And the priest would be quite satisfied with this compliment to his story, never suspecting that there was quiet irony concealed in the words.

He knew that only by appointing his own representatives to administer outlying areas could he obtain a real hold of these provinces and make sure that justice was done. Thus he gradually formed a corps of trusted and well-informed public servants who could be sent wherever there was need. These men were very different from the grasping tax gatherers and petty chiefs who had been wont to terrorise the land. When national need compelled it Menelek was both summary and severe in his confiscation of whatever food supplies were needful to his campaign, but it was well recognised in his realm that such action was exceptional and designed to meet special dangers. When the danger was ended he frequently adopted a policy of compensation to set trade moving again, and twice in time of famine he organised a very competently administered system of relief, distributing grain from the royal granaries.

Not only did he set up courts of justice throughout the length and breadth of Ethiopia, but he modernised the code which the courts administered. It is one of the



peculiarities of law that it always lags behind the thought of a nation. This is so in Britain, where almost within living memory amazing survivals of Saxon times have been at last abolished. Take 'deodand' as a fair example—how many people know what this was? Yet it existed long after its uses were outworn. Menelek was confronted with much the same sort of thing. Practices which dated from before Christ were still jealously maintained by the priesthood. Some of them showed a hopeless confusion of thought; others were clearly intended to work to the advantage of either priestly or secular authority. The king did his best to clean them out, but was careful not to travel too fast for the imaginations of his people.

Often rather than abrogate an old and illogical law his keen brain devised some means of circumventing it while still apparently observing its provisions. The classic example—what our lawyers would probably call a leading case—came before him, it is said, in the twentieth year of his reign. It arose from a charge of murder, and presented a nice specimen of the sort of obstinate refusal to think clearly with which he was continually faced.

A man of some substance, while climbing a tree to obtain a better shot at the game which he and a party of his friends were pursuing, slipped and fell upon one of them who was standing below. By an unfortunate chance he fell in such a way that his friend was picked up dead with a broken neck.

The relatives of the dead man claimed that he who had caused death must himself die. Killing was murder they insisted, and they invoked the ancient law in support of their claim. No one of any intelligence was deceived by their outcry, which was obviously directed to that provision of the old code which made a heavy fine payable to the near kin of the dead man from the wealth of the slayer. Nevertheless, they persisted, and it was difficult to deny their contentions since the law read "if any man

shall cause the death of another . . .” and showed no perception of the distinction between accident and design.

Menelek was equal to the occasion.

“You have invoked the Law of Moses,” he told the clamouring relatives of the dead man, “and I will administer it to you justly. None shall say that there is no justice in my kingdom and that your monarch tampers with the law.”

There was a murmur of applause when this sentiment was conveyed to the petitioners by the officer known as “the breath of the king.” (It is the custom in Ethiopia that the royal verdict shall always be uttered through a mouthpiece, who is condemned, by the ancient code, to the most drastic penalties if the king’s words are altered by him in passing them on.)

“The Law of Moses says,” continued Menelek, “‘an eye for an eye.’ It further provides that if a man slay another he shall himself be slain—and in like manner. It is also the duty and privilege of the slain man’s relatives to execute sentence. I therefore pronounce that he who has killed must die in the same manner as that in which he inflicted death. The next of kin of the slain shall climb the tree and himself fall upon the slayer. This he shall do until death results. This is my judgment in accord with the Mosaic Law.”

There was a murmur of discussion among the petitioners. The tree was some thirty feet high. The dead man’s next of kin was fat. He might well inflict death on anyone he chanced to fall upon, but the chances were equal that he would suffer it himself in the process.

He announced at length that he did not propose to exercise his privilege but would be content with the fine, for which the law provided.

“Tell him not so,” said the great Menelek. “He who appeals to the law must take the whole law or none at all. Release the prisoner, and bring no more such cases before me. Death by chance is no murder. Let every judge in all Ethiopia hearken to my words.”

The story continues that the priests were dissatisfied with the judgment and approached the king. An ill-deed had been wrought and someone must be punished. It would bring the law into discredit if nothing were done.

Menelek listened patiently to their case and gravely considered how he might appease them.

At length he asked: "How came the man to fall?"

"A branch of the tree broke beneath him," was the reply.

"Then," said Menelek, "I find the tree guilty of causing the death of one of my subjects. No tree shall do such an act and live. It shall not be said that I, Emperor of all Ethiopia, am not quick to avenge the wrongs which my subjects suffer. The tree shall be cut down—nay, utterly uprooted, that all may see that I rule justly and respect the law."

So the priests and the dead man's relatives made a great ceremony of uprooting the tree which they chopped into many pieces, savagely proclaiming that the dead man was thus avenged. And the great Menelek smiled into his beard.

Doubtless the story has lost nothing in the telling. It may well be that it is a modernised version of some ancient tale. But it is related still with much circumstantial detail by the story-tellers of Ethiopia, and appeals very much to the sense of humour of the new generation which is growing up in Addis Ababa, and to whom any triumph over the old superstitions is good news.

The value of the story lies not in its literal truth—though there is no reason to doubt it—but in the fact that a king's character is bound to emerge in the stories told concerning him. Whether the actual incident occurred or not is comparatively unimportant. What matters is that it shows the manner of man Menelek was, and how his people thought of him.

Another story which is told in Ethiopia, being attached to the name of any king deemed wiser than the rest, is also found in many other parts of the world, though it

is specially connected with the wisdom of Jewry. It is said that a father having died and having left his land equally between his sons, they disputed bitterly over the details of the actual division.

At length the king decreed that it was the privilege of the elder son as nearest to the father to divide the inheritance and was hailed by the elder son as a wise and righteous judge.

"And you, too, will deal justly," said the king. "You swear that you will make the division equal?"

The elder son was profuse in his protestations.

"Then," the king continued, "it will matter nothing to you that when the property is divided it shall be for your younger brother to decide which portion he will take."

This story is also related of Menelek. The subtle irony of the king might well have been his.

The British diplomats were well-liked by Menelek, for they were shrewd enough not to underrate him. He was secretly amused, but naturally also a little irritated, by the approach of certain other European representatives who treated him as though he were a childish savage. On one occasion when a tinkling musical-box was brought to him as a great curiosity he accepted it graciously and at once, in the ambassador's presence, caused it to be conveyed to the women and children in the palace. This gentle indication that he was not to be won by such toys was typical of one side of his character. He could show great wrath on occasion, and this even when he was dealing with Europeans. But when rightly treated he knew how to express his gratitude. Speaking to the delegation who were sent to him in 1897 for the purpose of concluding what is now known as the Rennell Rodd Treaty, he said: "Other nations have treated me as a baby and given me musical boxes, magic lanterns and mechanical toys. You, on the other hand, have brought me only what is of real use and value. Never have I seen such beautiful things before."

He showed a great appreciation of the power over disease which the white races exercised by means of medicine, and he astonished an English visitor in the last years of his life by saying:

"My body is a battleground and the powers of evil are gaining the day. I have asked the physician to send into my blood the forces of Christ that they may do battle, as the British did to many of my people who were attacked by the plague. But he tells me it is beyond his power."

It was plain from the remarks which followed that the Emperor had grasped the main principles of vaccination with a clearness shown by few oriental monarchs. In the years after Adowa, when small-pox devastated the country (to which sickness he was referring when he spoke of plague), it is recorded that he ordered the priests to double their prayers, and at the same time published an edict that all his subjects were to be vaccinated. This treatment was explained as a kind of sacrament, but the king was well aware that it was a medical and not a magical process, its sacramental nature arising from the truth that all good things are of Christ.

When the electric light was introduced into his palace the king set himself to master the principles which governed this latest wonder of the white man. But he never succeeded in understanding how light was possible without flame; and when he was one day the victim of a slight shock as the result of a faulty switch on a damp wall he very nearly had the whole installation dismantled. "I have never feared sword thrusts," he said, "but this pain which seized me is clearly of the devil."

About that time it was brought to his notice that a white wizard was astonishing the chieftains near Harar. The method adopted was simple. In a bowl of water the magician (an Armenian trader) placed twenty thalers, and to anyone who paid three thalers or its equivalent permission was given to plunge in his hand and take as much money as he could.

He warned them, nevertheless, that if they were not pure in heart the demon who dwelt in the water would seize their hand. None of the various applicants were of the necessary degree of purity, although they often went to the priest for purification beforehand. When they placed their hands in the water the demon immediately clutched them and caused them agony of pain.

Menelek listened to the tales that were brought him. Then he said: "You will find that the demon lives in a small box. This you can seize without fear for he will be powerless to harm you."

The Emperor had mastered the subject sufficiently to know that the white wizard had somewhere an electric battery.

King Menelek was a man of agile and determined thought, never afraid of new ideas merely because they were new, but always seeking to select which of them were likely to be of use to his country without delivering it into the hands of grasping white men. Thus he instituted a postage system which, though it did not operate over a very great area, being principally used to communicate with Jibuti, represented the beginning of civilising influences which, had continuity of administration been possible after Menelek's death, would probably have made far greater strides by now.

In his marriages Menelek was not altogether fortunate. His first wife, a daughter of Theodore, made his life a misery, for she could not in her heart forgive him for having turned her family from the throne. He divorced her and married again, this time with fair success; but his third wife, who, strangely enough, had the same name as the first, a circumstance which Menelek frequently lamented should have warned him, proved what modern terminology would describe as a butterfly and a gold-digger. She showed a weak-minded partiality for everything foreign and courted the notice of Europeans in the capital. Further, she wasted money on cheap and flashy wares, which she allowed traders to sell her at

exorbitant prices. Menelek at length rebelled, and after rather complicated negotiations the lady was persuaded, in return for handsome "alimony," to retire to a convent. Menelek's fourth wife was a remarkable woman. She was tall and regal in manner and had a very fair skin. She also had been married four times previously, which fact was popularly supposed to be particularly lucky. Each of her four husbands had occupied a responsible post, and while she had no great education, she had inherited from her father, the powerful Ras of Gondar, abundant if rather obstinate good sense.

In the year previous to her marriage she had won widespread fame, for she had led her own troops against the Italians at the advance on Makale. This deed, which has never been forgotten, is always told to the women of Ethiopia to inspire them with patriotism. Few foreign observers have realised the part which women play in determining the policies of the land.

The Empress Taitu was a generous, strong-minded woman, passionately devoted to her country and suspicious of all foreigners. She was opposed to innovations, and particularly disliked the European diplomats who, she was convinced, had only one object—to steal as much of Ethiopia as they could lay hands on.

It cannot be denied that in this last belief she was very close to the truth. The gradual encirclement of the country and the various pretexts for encroachments seemed to show beyond doubt that the white men were determined, as the Empress so often said, "to eat up" her native land. Though a devout believer in the national faith and a friend of religion, she always insisted to her husband that the Moslems were much less to be feared than the Christians, who were cruel and deceitful beneath a mask of fine words.

When a dispute arose over the Ucialli Treaty with Italy, it was Taitu who, having listened with anger while an Italian envoy raised his voice and spoke sharply to her husband, seized the offending document and tore

it in pieces; and in the Councils which preceded Adowa she took her full share.

Her bitter dislike of all things Italian was no secret in Addis Ababa and endeared her to the common people; but her attitude sometimes embarrassed Menelek in the handling of delicate foreign affairs. It was Menelek who insisted that when he denounced the Ucialli Treaty he must pay back the loan which had been advanced to him after the signature of the document—a sum amounting to 4,000,000 francs. He was adamant concerning this obligation, for the customs of Harar had been mortgaged as security for the loan and there was a clause that in the event of non-repayment the whole of that province should be taken by Italy. Taitu could not see that to refuse repayment of the money would be to play into Italian hands since it would give them a legal claim to Ethiopian territory. To her mind the Italians had, by their conduct, lost all right to any consideration from Menelek, and she is known to have urged her husband to keep the money. Menelek was wise enough to see that public opinion in Europe was a force to reckon with, and that the denunciation of the treaty would appear as fraud to the European mind unless accompanied by the immediate discharge of the loan with which a supplementary agreement had provided him. It was a typical instance of the sound judgment which the Emperor displayed throughout his whole reign. Taitu was delighted, however, when in 1896, in the earlier brushes before the Adowa campaign, Ras Makonnen, having besieged 1,500 Italians in the town of Makale and having cut off their water supply, refused to raise the siege until the Governor of Eritrea had sent one million thalers as reparation. Menelek was encouraged by this to demand 25,000,000 thalers as indemnity for the Italian attacks, and it was as the result of this demand that the ill-fated Baratieri advanced towards Adowa.

The prestige which accrued to Menelek after Adowa was immense. In the following year several envoys



arrived at the capital to make cordial representations on behalf of their countries. Most picturesque among them was Prince Henri D'Orleans, the Duc de Valois, who brought many very beautiful presents, including a magnificent service of Sèvres china, complete in every detail, some pieces of which are still used in the Palace.

By 1905 Menelek was at the peak of his power and prosperity, his failing health being the only factor in the Ethiopian situation which caused the least anxiety. But when in the following year he lost Ras Makonnen, who was to have succeeded him, he showed great sorrow and ceased to have so keen an interest in foreign affairs. So great was the power of his name, however, that the chiefs did not think it safe to rebel even when it was known that he was on his deathbed, though doubtless it was his clever policy which contributed towards this attitude on their part.

He had only replaced those chiefs who proved intractable and had shown more than once that he required good service and regular payment of taxes by according privileges to the chiefs who did not attempt to shuffle out of their obligations. Thus there was a considerable degree of self-government to be found in the outlying provinces, where the chiefs, who could use the might of Menelek's name as a bulwark against invaders, were neither humiliated nor unduly taxed by him. It was thus in their interest to keep him on the throne, for the weaker ones knew that the Emperor was their guarantee against aggression from the stronger provinces, and the stronger chiefs were bitterly jealous among themselves.

Taitu was a tower of strength in these last years. She was an efficient wife in every way, her only failing being a complete lack of tact. She had heard a great deal about Queen Victoria and always thought of herself in terms of the great White Queen, whose story, coupled with that of the Queen of Sheba, obtained a great hold on her imagination. This did not please the chiefs who were

bitterly resentful and swore that no woman should rule them.

On one occasion they were outraged by her casual treatment when several of them had journeyed considerable distances to the Palace, and raised a miniature revolt against her. Fearful of her life she meditated flight to the British Residency, but a friend of the Emperor's persuaded her that the best course was to go out, meet the rebels, trusting to Menelek's name to protect her, and to promise them better treatment in the future. This she did, and her royal bearing, conciliatory attitude and evident sincerity (for she had been thoroughly scared, probably for the first time in her life) made so great an impression that the chiefs and their followers cheered her before they dispersed.

However, it was obvious that the question of the succession must be decided and that with every postponement discontent would grow. Menelek at last proclaimed Lidj Yassu, son of his second daughter by her husband, Ras Mikael, chief of the Wollo Gallas, his heir, making the young Prince's tutor Regent.

Ras Tessama, the tutor, was a man of the same cast of mind as Ras Makonnen, of whose personality and distinguished career there follows a brief account.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE VISION OF RAS MAKONNEN

RAS MAKONNEN was the one man whom Menelek trusted implicitly and who shared the innermost secrets of his mind. He was a brave and skilful general and no act of barbarity was ever recorded against him; he was a clever, distinguished and, on occasion, subtle negotiator, but there was never the least question as to his honesty; he had a passion for machinery, a gift for mathematics, and a mind of scientific cast, yet he was a deeply religious man, for though science had enabled him to cast out superstition from his thoughts, it had never blinded him to spiritual considerations.

He was of rather more than middle height, perfectly proportioned, and athletic of stride. His regular and very handsome features showed no dominant racial characteristic. It was as though all that was best in the racial material available in Ethiopia had been blended in the pure lines and frank expression of the face. His crisp hair, though intensely curly, was of astonishing fineness, and the short well-trimmed beard, though neat and precise, was never pointed, having a kindly and reassuring bushiness, a sort of countryman's candour. In dignity of carriage and expression he moved among the diplomats of the first years of the twentieth century like some trusted survival of Queen Victoria's day.

Many Europeans who knew him have testified to his charm of manner, which came from an inner sincerity and was far more than a mere surface graciousness. He was popular in Rome, was received with royal honours in Paris, and in London made many friends both in government and intellectual circles (which two worlds

doubtless overlap!) in the course of his necessarily brief stay.

Like so many other ambassadors he sensed in Britain a solidity of power unlike anything he had experienced elsewhere; and though he was fortunate in his personal relationships with English people he never lost the feeling that such power, however justly used, was to be feared. Many times he said to Menelek, "I trust the British and yet I fear them. I have studied their history. In the end they always win."

Perhaps his most incisive and revealing remark concerning the English nation was an epigram, which went something like this: "Your Englishman's like a great cat. You stroke him and he purrs very happily. But don't try to pick him up—he scratches!"

It must be pointed out that the cat is held in much greater honour in the East than in the West, so there was nothing in the least insulting in the comparison. Nor did he mean to suggest any feminine characteristics. Cats as the East knows them are extremely masculine and marauding animals.

"He was the first Ethiopian general to make his men clean their guns," said an English officer who knew him well. "He would often clean his himself to set an example. You could see by the way he handled each part and the care with which he reassembled them that anything mechanical was fascinating to him."

When he was in London he spent many of his happiest hours in Woolwich Arsenal, where the intricate machinery enthralled him, but he always shook his head sorrowfully over the increasing power of the lethal weapons which the European races were perfecting. When told that a gun had a range of twelve miles he said, "What a weapon for cowards!"

His most celebrated campaign was against the Italians, but from the military standpoint the most striking proof of his genius as a leader came when he was sent to deal with Hajji Muhammad, the Somali Sheik of Ogaden,

usually referred to as the "Mad Mullah." Learning that this "terror of the south" was marching on Harar with a force which some estimates placed at ten and others at twenty thousand, Ras Makonnen showed complete unconcern. Calling in his colleague, the genial General Benti, whom he knew could be trusted to carry out orders, he arranged for a flank attack on the advancing hordes. This was completely successful. At Jijiga in the April of 1900 the Mullah's forces received a crushing defeat, but so great was his personal influence that before the year was out he had rallied his tribesmen and was advancing again.

This time Ras Makonnen did not wait for the advance, but taking the leadership of his army made a forced march into the heart of the Ogaden provinces to defeat the Mullah on his own ground. It is difficult to be sure how many men the Sheik Hajji had collected, but it is certain that they outnumbered the Abyssinians by about three to one. Ras Makonnen had only five thousand men, but they were picked fighters, and he always preferred to fight with a small and reliable force rather than with a large but ill-disciplined body. In his first battle he cut straight through the Somalis and slew seven or eight thousand of them. Then he returned to deal with the detachments which his bold move had cut off from their main body and their inspiring chief. But by the time he had dealt with these, the Mullah's troops were again on the move, having rallied on the Somali border, and Ras Makonnen was forced to appeal to Menelek for aid. Menelek at once sent ten thousand men to reinforce the Ethiopian army, and with these the Mad Mullah was so decisively routed that he never crossed into Menelek's territories again, though after the Emperor's death, as will be related, he was actually for a while in alliance with the Abyssinians against the combined forces of France, Italy, and Britain, whose territories he harassed continuously until his death.

Ras Makonnen was a devoted father and had a large family. Tafari, his son, was one of twenty-two children,

his claim to the throne depending on the fact that his mother was niece of Menelek. Makonnen would have wished to have been able to superintend the education of this clever son of his in whose veins the blood of Menelek flowed, but his duties were many. When he was not fighting he was either called to Addis Ababa to advise the Emperor or sent to represent him in negotiations with Europeans. These missions at length took him to Europe, as has been told. But even in the intervals of the many services which he so loyally and punctiliously rendered to his monarch he had little leisure to return to his own capital at Harar and deal with family affairs.

After the rebellion of Mangasha in the north of Tigre which failed owing to the fact that his men deserted when they learned that the great Ras Makonnen, the "breath of Menelek," was marching against them, the whole of that province had been added to Makonnen's area of jurisdiction. There were often local insurrections, and instead of putting them down ruthlessly, killing on the spot every man caught with arms, Ras Makonnen tried hard to adopt a judicial attitude and to fix responsibility.

This led to long enquiries, and did little good; for the spared men showed no gratitude. The reason for this was that they could not understand why they had not been killed, so foreign to their minds was the idea of impartial justice. If they were allowed to go free with a fine and a warning then it must be that some magic had bewitched the mind of the Ras, unless it was that he feared the revenge of their relatives. Dealing with these wild hill-men by methods of justice and mercy might well have seemed a hopeless task; for the slightest relenting was always interpreted as weakness and led to more troubles. Nevertheless Ras Makonnen, who had learned from European missionaries to respect the ideal of justice above all others, persevered. When it was pointed out to him that he was wasting time and that his spared enemies merely despised him, he would say: "All that I know. But we must make a beginning. The great Solomon was a just

king. Justice is the most important rule of life. God will judge us as we have judged."

It sickened Ras Makonnen to be compelled to hang twenty deluded wretches who had been deceived by some plausible chieftain into joining his rebel forces. Even the rebel chieftain himself, if he was an able man with any good in him at bottom, could be sure of right treatment from Makonnen were he to submit. Ras Mangasha, for example, was a good soldier, and though he several times tried to throw off the control of Menelek, nevertheless fought bravely against the Italians. When he was compelled to surrender in 1899 it was to a great extent the influence of Ras Makonnen that resulted in his life being spared. The rebel chief appeared before the Emperor at a great court held at Boro Myeda, near the famous fort of Magdala. He, and his companion, Ras Sebat, each with a stone upon his head (which is the old Amharic custom) made humble submission and their lives were spared.

"He is too good a fighter to waste," said Makonnen to Menelek—speaking of Ras Mangasha. "We may need him again before long."

The next year Mangasha's son rebelled, but this time Ras Makonnen was not long in the field against the insurgents, for his duties led him to the south where there was trouble with the Mullah. The chief to whom the task of putting down the Tigre revolt, which was one of several in that area, was entrusted, adopted a Cromwellian policy. The rebels were hanged without mercy. After three months of this there was peace for three years, and Ras Mangasha lived so to redeem his reputation that many spoke of him as Menelek's heir.

It does credit to Menelek that when the enemies of Ras Makonnen contrasted the efficiency of his successor with the mistaken leniency to the Emperor's enemies which he had shown, the Emperor refused to listen, saying that he would hear no word against the greatest soldier and wisest chieftain in the land.

Tafari Makonnen was devoted to his father but saw too little of him. Nevertheless much of the father's character was passed on to his son—his love of learning, his instinctive wish to do justice. Ras Makonnen had himself received instruction from the priests of the Catholic Mission at Harar and knew them to be capable teachers. He was content to place his son in their hands. It is a curious and unexplained fact that conversion from the Coptic faith to that of Rome is a great rarity. Makonnen had no fear of this. The priests made no attempt to proselytise the young boy entrusted to their care, instilling rather the general principles of Christian charity than the particular tenets of their Church. In this they were wise, for Tafari's active mind with its eager love of country would have been quick to resent any tampering with his faith in the Church of Ethiopia. He responded readily, however, to the ideal of religious toleration and when in later years he was destined to fight the Mohammedans he fought them only as rebels and did not think of the conflict as a religious war.

Comparisons between father and son are instructive. The love of machinery displayed by Ras Makonnen developed in young Tafari into a love of abstract science, while the boy inherited in even more striking degree the love of books which had always characterised his father.

It is told of Ras Makonnen that once in London when he was shown a beautiful copy of the great Ethiopian classic, *The Miracles of the Virgin Mary*, he knelt down and pressed the heavy volume against his brow, praying the while for the Blessing of Mary and all her Angels. The sincerity of the act, the evident devotion of the chieftain and his trust in the holy faith of his land made a deep impression on the few people who witnessed the scene. Makonnen would have been proud to think that not least among the services which his son was to render to Ethiopia was the translation and careful editing of many of the sacred books which the monasteries guard.



Ras Makonnen died, worn out some say by his exertions, but the vision of a new Ethiopia which had always been before his eyes lived on in the mind of his son. Ethiopia must set her house in order and learn from the West all that was good. There must be less bloodshed, more cohesion, for powerful foes would soon be pressing from without. There must be an end of barbaric punishments, then an end of all the abuses which accompanied slavery; lastly an end of slavery itself. Menelek, for all his faults, had made a beginning. Unity had been achieved. The next step was to make use of this newly found unity for the betterment of all the land.

Makonnen died, little of his dream realised. And when Menelek died, it seemed that what little advance had been won towards modernisation was lost in the confusion which followed. But within the brain of Tafari Makonnen his father's vision did not fade. When all hope seemed useless, when civilisation outside of Ethiopia seemed almost lost sight of in widespread and terrible war and civilising forces within her borders were fighting with their backs to the wall, the seed which Makonnen had sowed flowered unexpectedly but with brilliance in the person of Ras Tafari, who amid many perils, and with enemies both open and secret surrounding him, founded a new order of life in his country, and brought Ethiopia forward to take her place once more in the history of the world.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE YOUTH OF HAILE SELASSIE

ALTHOUGH his father, Ras Makonnen, was the accepted heir of the Emperor Menelek it seemed on his death in 1906 that there was little chance that his son would eventually make good his father's claim. The young boy, for he was only thirteen years old when his father died, was not old enough to have caught the eye of Menelek, and even had he done so it is not likely that the Emperor would have considered his claim, for the slight build and highly strung nature of the lad would not have found much favour in the sight of the strong, hard-living ruler of a troubled country.

Lidj Yassu (the name means "Child Jesus," but would appear to have been singularly inappropriate) was at that time the favourite in court circles. A tall, well-built youth, with a sheen of bronze in his healthy, brown skin, he won all hearts by his simplicity, his natural easy-going manners, and above all by his gift for all kinds of sport.

For to a man outstanding in sport, whether it is running, riding, shooting or the throwing of the spear, the Abyssinian gives a whole-hearted hero-worship such as a fourth-form boy feels towards the captain of his school. Much of the English influence in Addis Ababa undoubtedly springs from the sporting tendencies of their race. It is still remembered how one night some years ago a band of thieves, led by a discharged servant with a grievance, broke into the British Legation and were fought single-handed by the Minister, who laid out four or five of the marauders with his bare fists.

Lidj Yassu, who excelled in sport, was therefore a great favourite, while the studious youngster who crept about

the palace attracted no favourable notice. For all his charm, however, there was a sad streak of weakness in Lidj Yassu's character. He had courage of a sort, but lacked the power to fight a losing cause. Also he was undoubtedly a bully.

Knowing that the orphan son of Ras Makonnen, though two years his senior, was of a nervous disposition, he did all in his power to ridicule and frighten him. He would come riding into the courtyard of the palace and cause his high-mettled horse to rear up suddenly so that its flashing hoofs seemed about to descend upon Tafari's head. Then as the boy cowered away he would swerve out of his path, laughing at the terror which he had inspired.

His tutor, Ras Tessama, to whom Ras Makonnen had been a friend, did all in his power to check the unkindness of Lidj Yassu, but protests did very little good. Once when a wild horse had been brought in from the hill pastures and only partly tamed, Lidj Yassu went so far as to place Tafari Makonnen on its back and send it galloping off madly with a sharp slash of his hide whip. The horse careered wildly down the slope, young Tafari clinging for dear life to the shaggy mane. His eyes showed terror, but he clung on. With drawn face and set teeth he stuck to the mount until it tired. Yassu took great delight in this joke of his and repeated it on several occasions. He was courted by everyone in Addis Ababa since it was guessed that he would one day be Emperor. There was thus no one to interfere.

Tafari learned to take a beating, to be desperately afraid and yet to hang on. That lesson was to mould his whole character. In after years he never showed reckless bravery, but once he had set his hand to anything he never let go.

Ras Tessama often despaired of imparting the principles of right conduct to the wild prince in his charge, but he was a loyal servant of Menelek and laboured hard to fit the Emperor's favourite for the throne. His outlook was

cosmopolitan, for in his campaigns having had on his staff three officers, a Swiss, a French and a Russian, he had seen to what extent the European could be depended on, and had learnt a great deal. On an expedition to the White Nile he had seen the rivalry between the great powers of Europe and had observed the jealousy with which each tried to plant a flag first in any unexplored region. Tessama is also said to have known Arthur Rimbaud, the French poet, whose story is one of the strangest in the world. He was thus favourably disposed towards French culture, but it was Britain whom he feared.

For five years after Ras Makonnen's death, Tessama kept Yassu within bounds and did many kindnesses to the young Tafari. He gave the boy his first full size gun and watched with great pleasure the ability which Tafari soon showed in the handling of it. Tessama also saw that the good education which his father had desired for him was imparted at the hands of the French Mission in Harar, the capital of Ras Makonnen's province.

Tafari soon showed that his hand was steady and his eye keen. By constant practice he became a first class shot, far better than Lidj Yassu, whose steadiness of hand had already been lessened by the dissipations in which he indulged despite Tessama's efforts to prevent him. This was a source of great mortification to Yassu, who one day stole some cartridges which Tafari had been saving for a special occasion. Ammunition is always short in Ethiopia and to steal a man's cartridges is a very heinous offence under the law, which regards it much as horse stealing was thought of in the Wild West, where a man's horse was a matter of life and death to him. Lidj Yassu found himself faced by a furiously angry Tafari who levelled a gun at him and demanded the return of his cartridges. At first he laughed out loud at this sign of determination on the part of one of whom he thought so little. Then as he saw the look in the eyes behind the

gun, he threw down the stolen ammunition saying that he had only been joking.

That was the first triumph of Tafari over the man who bullied him. It taught the timid lad that the best way to deal with some sorts of people is always to call their bluff.

It was a great grief to Tafari when Ras Tessama died. The true circumstances of this death were never cleared up but it is certain that not long after he became Regent he met his end through poison. Who was the instigator of the crime it is difficult to say. Perhaps it was some older friend of Yassu's who was jealous of the influence which the General exerted over the prospective ruler of the country and who wished to have the field clear to himself. Another possibility is that it was the Empress Taitu who was behind the crime. In her case the motive is harder to suggest, but she may possibly have resented the degree to which her husband, now a very sick man, depended on his General's advice.

Tessama died with the word "Poison" on his lips but gave no hint of his own opinions as to who had killed him. A slave in his household disappeared about that time and was declared to be the guilty party. But Menelek knew differently and shook his head with sorrow when the news came that Tessama had died. "First Makonnen," he said, "and now Tessama. Soon I too shall pass, and who knows what will come upon my country."

To a man who had lived so fully as the great Menelek the thought of death was not easy, and he had postponed the making of any public announcement concerning his heir, though as early as 1902 the claims of the various possible successors had been discussed in council. As his illness increased, anything which savoured of death had become acutely distasteful to him and none had ventured to speak of it except the Empress, who was always eager that her own power might be both extended

and confirmed. Menelek, though he valued justly her undeniable merits would never hear of Taitu having any power to rule, and though his last days were made unhappy by her protestations he kept to his decision.

It was in the year 1909 that Menelek first faced the fact that the stability of his country could best be secured by naming an heir at once and thus giving his successor time to obtain a hold on the reins of government before the death of the Emperor should call him to the throne.

Summoning to his bedside the Abuna Mattheos, Menelek turned to him and said in solemn tones: "I call you to witness, Mattheos, that I have this day chosen Lidj Yassu, my grandson, born of my daughter the Princess Shoaraga whom I love. He shall reign after me, and that the people accept him shall be your charge. You of our Holy Church are to support him. He who rebels against him you shall excommunicate. But if he himself shall rebel against your holy power then shall he be excommunicated. . . . Now let us set apart a day for the summoning of my chieftains that we may tell them what is to be."

When he had obtained the assent of the Abuna, Menelek caused all the nobles and the Imperial bodyguard to come together and also summoned all the troops that were stationed round the capital. It was a dramatic moment when he called on them to be faithful to his heir as they had been to him and to fight bravely for him against all his foes.

"The curse of God shall rest upon any one of you who shall refuse obedience and he shall beget a black dog for a son. But if he who reigns after me shall betray you or shall behave deceitfully, or seek to deliver up our country to the stranger, then shall you be free of your oaths and the curse shall rest upon him. He shall beget a black dog for son and all the righteous shall turn away their faces from him."

The death of a king has always been a grave moment in Ethiopian history—it is a strict custom, in fact, that

the death of the ruler may not be spoken of by anyone directly. It has to be mentioned always in roundabout phrases: "The air at this season is evil towards kings." Or "This is the time of year when kings die." The origin of this strange custom must go back far indeed in the history of the Amharic race. It is based, no doubt, upon the old conception that in some strange way the fate of the people is bound up in that of their king. Some say in Ethiopia that it will bring disaster upon the country if it is said openly that the king is dead since the demons who lurk in the darkness will be emboldened to attack the cattle or even the subjects of the realm if they learn that there is no king to defend the land. Thus speech concerning the death of kings must be cryptic to deceive the demons so that they will suspect nothing until the new ruler has full power.

Major Darley in his account of his travels tells how when King Edward died the news reached the Abyssinians long before the exploring party was aware of it. Thus, when complaining of his treatment to a chieftain, he threatened that the government of Great Britain would require justice against any who did evil towards him, he was asked in enigmatic tones: "How do you know that there is a British Government any longer?" The Ethiopians were convinced that following the death of the king there would be such serious disorder in Britain that it would be a long while indeed before that country would be able to reassert its authority along the Abyssinian frontiers.

Menelek's death was hidden by the Empress as long as she was able. It is a grim and rather frightening story how she watched many days beside the dead body of her husband not daring to allow her servants to tell the chieftains that their ruler was dead. The body was eventually embalmed, but the burial of the greatest ruler who ever held the destinies of Ethiopia in his strong hand was done secretly, so shameful were the events which followed the accession of Lidj Yassu to the throne.

Yassu owed everything to the love and kindness which his grandfather Menelek had shown towards him from the earliest years, but there was in his character neither gratitude nor reverence. He was at heart afraid of the great destiny to which he had been called and believed that were he to be crowned, secret enemies would find some way to destroy him. He postponed his coronation, neglected his duties, and lived a life of riotous pleasure surrounded by boon companions, some of them older than himself, whose brawls and wild behaviour disgusted all who saw them.

They would ride out at morning to hunt in the hills and after the day's sport would ride drunkenly back to the palace striking any who chanced to be in their way and acting with the greatest bravado. On one occasion the force of police whom Menelek had organised, somewhat on European lines, to guard the streets of his city after darkness, attempted to interfere with the vile behaviour of the king's friends. A pitched battle was fought in the streets and the police were routed. Several were shot dead on the spot. Those who fled were sought out on the following day and killed without mercy.

The Empress Taitu at length begged the Archbishop to arrange for the burial of her lord, but he was afraid to perform the ceremony publicly by day in case the band of dissolute ruffians led by Yassu should show open disrespect to the proceedings, for Yassu had already banned any public mention of Menelek's name.

In a small church on the outskirts of the city a grave was secretly prepared and the body of the dead Emperor was hurried there at dead of night with neither procession nor music, and only a few hastily muttered prayers from the head of the Church. The body was left in the darkness, for those who had performed the burial were afraid that the light of candles would betray them.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE DOWNFALL OF LIDJ YASSU

THE character of Lidj Yassu, like so many other things in Ethiopian history, is a puzzle hard to solve. Of his disgraceful conduct towards his dead grandfather there can be no question, nor is it easy to deduce any reasonable explanation. But it seems unlikely, in view of the many tributes which have been paid to the prince's charming disposition, that there was no reason whatever for his almost unforgivable actions.

Perhaps the clue to all these strange happenings lies in the fact that he had from his grandmother a strong strain of Wollo Galla blood in his veins. This made him always turn towards the teaching of the Prophet, for the Gallas have maintained the faith of Islam. Then, also, there is the fact that he was called to the throne at the beginning of the most tremendous war which the world has ever known. The disturbance caused by the conflict spread everywhere and took in Abyssinia a most serious form.

One of the lesser known aspects of the war is the attempt by the German agents working in the Near East to raise a vast Mohammedan "Jehad" or holy war against the Allies. Money was not stinted in this task and Lidj Yassu, with his known Islamic leanings, was fair game. His kingdom lay between Egypt (including the Egyptian Sudan) and British East Africa. Now the Turks were attacking Egypt, and south of British East Africa was German East Africa, a vigorous colony which, after earlier maladministrations, had adopted British methods with great success. (The last fact is not British complacence. It was openly suggested in the report made by

the German Commission sent to reform the colony that British systems should be tried.)

It will thus be seen that Lidj Yassu's kingdom occupied a strategic position of the very highest importance. Both to the Turks attacking Egypt and to the German East African colonists attacking the British possessions to the north of them, Ethiopia, if she could be secured as an ally, could give the most valuable aid, since she could take both Egypt and British East Africa in the rear.

Now this fact was not a sudden discovery after the outbreak of war. It had long been foreseen by German "men on the spot." In Yassu they had seen their opportunity to embarrass Great Britain on two fronts. There were also the adjoining territories of France and Italy—open to attack while the major forces required for their defence were sorely needed in Europe.

Against the German agents worked the British Secret Service. Both sets of workers concentrated on Lidj Yassu, offering him money, promising him Empire. And the Germans won hands down.

Their attack was directed towards the social side of Yassu's character. "Wein, Weib und Gesang" was their slogan. He was invited to parties, flattered—not only by men but by women imported for the express purpose, and given not only unlimited Rhine wine but the very best champagnes.

All this occurred before the actual outbreak of European hostilities, and was viewed with great concern by the British authorities, who were at a loss to know how the German ascendancy might be combated. It was thus that Lidj Yassu, courted by the Ethiopians as heir to the throne and surrounded by Europeans anxious to grant his every whim in order to obtain influence over him, lost his sense of proportion completely. His character was undermined by excesses, and his judgment clouded by the whispers of foreign advisers. Few men could have withstood so insidious an assault upon their personalities. Lidj Yassu

came to a bad end, but the fault was partly to be found in circumstance.

Within less than a year of the death of Menelek war broke out in Europe, and immediately those who had sown commenced to reap. The Mullah of Somaliland was in the field again threatening destruction to unbelievers—by which was meant particularly his British and Italian neighbours. German agents told Lidj Yassu that here lay his chance. The best fighters in his own dominions were Mohammedan. The Coptic priests were unpopular because of their exactions. To the south there were powerful Mohammedan allies, while to the north in the Egyptian Sudan the faith of Islam was strong. Let him declare for the Prophet. The Christian Church would soon be overthrown and all its riches might be seized. He could become the centre of a vast Mohammedan revolt which would give him a mighty empire. The Mullah was an old man, in the north there were no great leaders; he, the son of Menelek, could carry all before him. The great thing was to strike at once and strike hard.

But Lidj Yassu had no love for war. He was too easy going. He listened with interest to the vision of empire placed before him, but his shrewd mind must have realised that it was not out of pure friendship that he was offered immediate aid to make the dream come true. He knew, also, that for all the stories which reached him of German conquest, the Suez Canal was in British hands and that there were many Arabs fighting for the Allies.

Weakly he toyed with the proposed plans but did nothing irrevocable.

It was noticeable, however, that his attitude of friendliness to those of his chieftains who were followers of the Prophet (these were mostly from the south and west) grew more pronounced, and that when an attempt was made to prevent arms from reaching the Mullah he took steps to ensure that the arms got through. It was alleged that when the Mohammedan Galla tribes rebelled he sent

a force against them, but at the same time advised the rebels of its movements so that they were able to massacre the attackers. The story was told that a band of some fifty Somalis were received by him as guests after they had slain the Ethiopians—while his people had expected them to be put on trial for their lives.

The fact that no effective protest was made against any of these actions of his convinced him that his power was absolute and his next moves were more open. He built a mosque at Diredawa and was present with the Mohammedan chiefs at its consecration; he put Islamic symbols upon his flag, took for the motto of his house "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God," and finally went so far as to call in the Turkish Consul, who having joined in the ceremony of installing the new flag, told Yassu that he must now consider himself under the protection of the Ottoman Empire.

The representatives of the other European governments in Ethiopia were not slow in pointing out that this was a serious step since Turkey was at war with the Allies. But Lidj Yassu plunged even further into his mad career, and to an audience of Galla and Somali chieftains publicly proclaimed his allegiance to the Prophet. It is said that he had embroidered upon the flags of his household troops the figure of a man with a scimitar declaring to the priests that there was nothing Mohammedan in the design which, he said, was a portrait of Suleiman. No one was deceived by this evasion.

The German Secret Service had so far won all along the line, but it was soon to be the turn of the British agents to strike back. Despairing of bringing Yassu to his senses they looked around for some prince of noble birth who could be relied on to espouse the Christian cause. There was only one person whose claim could be held to equal Yassu's and that was Tafari Makonnen who, as can be seen from the genealogical table, had Sahele Selassie for great-grandfather, and was therefore in the line of the blood royal.

The British were more subtle in their approach to the problem than the Germans had been, and this fact completely deceived Yassu, who was entirely unaware of their intrigue against him until it was too late. Tafari was asked "How many chiefs would follow you if you could give them guns?" He said that he did not think there would be any chance of securing a large following while Yassu was still the chosen successor of Menelek, but he recounted the words which the Emperor had used when appointing Yassu his heir—"if he breaks faith with you let him be excommunicated"—and indicated that the Abuna Mattheos had the situation in his hands.

The priests did not care much for Ras Tafari since they suspected him of caring too much for foreign ways and of having too critical an outlook upon the sacred books of the land; but he was, nevertheless, as far as outward conformity was concerned, a devout communicant of the Coptic Church and as such a better ruler from their point of view than Yassu who had scandalised and not a little perturbed the entire priesthood by his favours to the Islamic chiefs.

Little by little the foundations of revolt were laid. The least error of judgment on the part of the plotters would have cost the Ras Tafari his life, but so cleverly were the plans concealed that in 1916 Yassu went south into Somaliland to raise a force and to join the Mullah without the least idea that rebellion was brewing in Addis Ababa and that his hold on the throne was insecure.

As soon as he had left events moved swiftly. First a congress of chieftains approached the Abuna Mattheos reminding him of Menelek's words and asserting with many corroborative instances that Yassu, by his conduct, had forfeited their loyalty. He had insulted the Holy Church, had plotted against the lives of his Christian subjects, had given his country into the hands of foreigners, and would bring destruction upon them all.

The Abuna Mattheos temporised. He had little liking for Yassu, but he did not wish to indulge in active

rebellion until he was sure that he was on the winning side. To start an ineffectual revolt would merely give Yassu the excuse he needed for a direct attack upon the Christian Church. It was best to find out what was the spirit of the chiefs, what the people felt, and above all who had the rifles.

So the Abuna was cautious. While he admitted that Lidj Yassu had done much that conformed ill to his most holy vows, he pleaded that he was young, that bad influences were at work upon him. Given time he would doubtless see the error of his ways.

This adroit speech revealed to the chiefs that the Abuna was with them but was not yet ready to show his hand, but at that moment the British agents brought off a piece of propaganda which brought to every Christian in Abyssinia proof indisputable that Yassu was a Moslem of the deepest dye.

All countries let loose a flood of propaganda among the African peoples during the war. A good deal of it was directed towards making Mohammedans take sides. In England some of the ablest writers of the day were employed to write manifestos to the Arabs. The story goes that one chief of propaganda on receiving from Mr. Bernard Shaw a brilliantly persuasive appeal to all true followers of the Prophet to unite against Germany, said to his staff: "Splendid stuff. Now just add that the Prince of Wales has turned Mohammedan and stick in a photograph of a mosque in the grounds of Buckingham Palace. Then you can print two million of these and send them out at once!"

This tale, though doubtless inaccurate as to detail, is fairly true in principle. British propaganda was amazingly successful among Eastern peoples largely because it never told a direct lie but always worked on an underlying modicum of truth. This was the policy adopted in dealing with Lidj Yassu. A big photograph was taken of a Mohammedan festival and the face of the leader who, in full Moslem regalia, was pronouncing a

blessing upon the crowd, was changed by an adroit piece of double printing to that of Lidj Yassu, ruler of the Great and Most Christian Empire of Menelek, "whom angels guard."

The effect of the strewing broadcast of this picture was sensational. The priests rose as one man to demand excommunication of the vile apostate. It was believed at once that there was a plot to exterminate all Christians and seize their goods. The chiefs renewed their demand that Yassu be desposed.

At the same time the European governments, acting through their Consuls General, took a hand. Following the episode of the Turkish Consul and the flags, they had addressed strong protests to Yassu and since he had ignored them, they had prepared to take further action. From the first they had done their best to prevent any arms or ammunition from reaching the Germanophile king and now they mustered three forces to close in upon him.

These troops, though not numerous, for very few men could be spared, sufficed to make a tremendous impression on the Christian chiefs, who immediately marched their men to the palace and issued an ultimatum. At the same time the Italians at Massawa, the French at Jibuti and the British at Berbera got their columns on the move, while every precaution was taken to cut off any German supplies of arms for Yassu.

Ras Tafari, acting on good advice, had kept in the background till this stage, partly to escape the wrath of Yassu and partly so as not to cause jealousy among the other rebel chiefs. It was now revealed that he was receiving guns from the Allies and that money had been placed at his disposal as well.

The last unknown in the equation—the position of the guns—was thus revealed, and the chiefs declared to a man that Ras Tafari should lead them.

"Release us from our oaths!" they cried to the Abuna. "We will never permit a Moslem to rule us. Yassu

deceived us when he changed his faith. The curse of Menelek shall rest upon him! Let him be cast out from our Kingdom as from our Church."

"This I will do," said the Abuna. "Upon the head of the traitorous Yassu there shall fall the curse of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the anathema of the Twelve Apostles, the wrath of the Three Hundred and Eighteen Most Holy Fathers of the Council of Nicea, the curse of Arius, the shame of Judas, the fury of all the angels, and the most sacred and potent anger of every Blessed Saint in the Great Heaven!" . . . He paused, "and to these I add my humble word," he ended. "I hereby excommunicate him."

"And now chieftains, faithful sons of the Church, who shall rule in the traitor's stead?"

"The Princess Zawditu, daughter of Menelek," was the answer. "She shall reign over us with the wisdom of her father and Ras Tafari Makonnen, son of the great warrior, shall be Regent and Heir to the Throne!"

"You have chosen well," said the Abuna. "Zawditu and Tafari shall reign. Their word shall be as the word of the Great Menelek, the Angel of Menelek shall guard them, and if any man in all Ethiopia shall fail to do their will on him shall alight the sevenfold curse that is the portion of Yassu!"

Thus, on September 27th, 1916, Ras Tafari Makonnen ascended to the throne of Ethiopia to reign beside the Princess Zawditu. But he had yet to fight for that throne.



## CHAPTER XV

### ZAWDITU

HISTORY shows many times that it is not in the interest of "the barons" to have too powerful a figure at the head of the kingdom, and it is probable that the Ethiopian chiefs who chose Ras Tafari as the Regent and future successor to the throne believed that in setting up a dual authority at Addis Ababa they had done a shrewd piece of work. Ras Tafari was not greatly esteemed at the time of his election because he had few of the surface qualities which endear an Abyssinian chief to his subjects. He was known to be clever and far-seeing—had he not successfully intrigued against the apostate Yassu?—and he knew how to get rifles out of the detested foreigner; but there was nothing of the strong man about him, and the chiefs were quite clear in their own minds that there would be no difficulty in keeping him in his place.

The system of dual control gave every opportunity for intrigue, and it was well known that the Empress Zawditu had little liking for Ras Tafari; so it seemed that the Regent had a troublous journey ahead of him. It was difficult, for instance, for him to invoke the name of Menelck as authority for his acts when, sharing the throne with him, and in perpetual disapproval, sat Menelek's favourite daughter, who proved in her every action that her father's blood flowed strongly in her veins.

Those who speak of Ras Tafari as cunning should meditate the situation in which he found himself. The precepts of Machiavelli had to be employed with considerable thoroughness if he were to survive.

Even more than the Empress Taitu, the Princess Zawditu had sorrowed for Menelek, her father. It was by

her care that the body of the dead Emperor was embalmed, and for two years she would not let the body leave her possession. At length Yassu, in one of his fits of sullen bullying, drove her from the palace.

The sight of Menelek's daughter driven from her home would have been disturbing in any circumstances to the chieftains who had loved the Emperor, but Zawditu's simple dignity and her gift of powerful speech brought home to everyone the disgraceful conduct of the new king.

"I, an Emperor's daughter, am cast out. Think then what shall happen to you!"

The Princess Zawditu knew that sympathy is a transient emotion in most men unless reinforced by the thought "It may be your turn next." She sounded this note continually, and when finally Lidj Yassu expelled her from Addis Ababa and bade her take refuge in a convent, she went instead quietly from chief to chief exposing the wrongs inflicted upon her and the outrage which had been done to her father's memory. She had Menelek's gift of sudden warmth of glance, she knew how to waken personal loyalty. She was not strong enough in character to hold it for long, but she always came well out of a crisis. Ras Tafari had no such gift; but the attachments which he formed were more enduring.

Ras Tafari used her as a cover for his own plans. He knew that she could appeal to the chiefs. Her speech to the Abuna and the assembled nobles which she delivered at the time of her choice by them as queen was a masterpiece of direct oratory. "May God pitch his tent among you," she said. "You have chosen me, and I pray that you have chosen wisely. Your faith is my faith, your sorrow my sorrow. All the love which I bore to Menelek your Emperor I now give freely to you. Henceforth it is you who are my glory, for when I bade farewell to Menelek did I not lose all that was splendid in this world?" A large concourse heard these stately words. The Abuna Mattheos wept with joy, Walda Gewargis,

Etchege of Ethiopia, gave thanks to God that the spirit of Menelek still dwelt among men. Princes of the blood royal, chieftains, priests and officers hailed her as their queen.

Although her own personality had played a great part in her triumph she owed a great deal more than she realised to the cool brain of Ras Tafari, who with a small group of devoted friends had organised the victory. This she never admitted, and from the very first days she watched jealously everything that the Regent did, losing no opportunity of accusing him of exceeding his powers.

Although she ascended the throne on 30th September, 1916, it was not till February of the following year that the coronation ceremony was performed. Scarcely was it completed when news was brought to Ras Tafari that Lidj Yassu was in communication with the Empress with a view to replacing him at her side. Following his dethronement Yassu, with a cheery disregard of the solemn nature of his many oaths to Allah, swore by the holy scriptures and by the Cross of Christ that he was a true believer, and would defend with the last drop of his blood the doctrines of the Holy Church. Only a month previously, to a gathering of Moslem chiefs on the borders of Somaliland he had protested his devotion to Islam and had produced a long and highly convincing document, prepared for him by a holy man, in which he claimed direct male descent from the Prophet. Such pedigrees are a frequent feature in Eastern history, for the first concern of every usurper is that the priests shall produce evidence of his distinguished lineage. This they never fail to do. No one really believes in these hastily constructed genealogies, but everyone would be offended were they not produced. It is related that when a scholarly European, who had become on excellent terms with a Mohammedan holy man, protested against the sheer impossibility of one of these family trees, he was told solemnly: "Do you not know that there are other births than those of the flesh?" Presumably the priestly conscience was salved by the

postulation of some mystic kinship. Certain it is that in the case of Lidj Yassu the descent may well have taken place on the spiritual plane, for he was in both his good and bad qualities a typical Mohammedan.

His line of argument in approaching the Empress was that together they could dominate the whole country since he had the loyalty of the Galla chiefs and she had the support of the Shoan nobles, together with the blessing of the Abuna, whose voice swayed the Church. Ras Tafari he accused of preparing to hand over his country to the British—from whom he had accepted guns to arm the chieftains who followed him. He also said that Tafari had secret stores of money which Zawditu should have shared. Yassu announced his willingness to forego his share entirely should these moneys be seized.

While he was throwing out these feelers in the direction of Zawditu, Lidj Yassu, at last roused to energy by his fallen fortunes, was making plans for a concerted attack upon the capital. He aimed at striking first in the direction of Harar and then working up the railway line (still incomplete in those days) towards the hills. Meanwhile his followers on the western side were to keep on raiding so that the government forces would be divided.

When Ras Tafari found that the Empress had received messages from Lidj Yassu without telling him he was furious, for though he knew that so far there had been no treachery, he would have been sadly lacking in perspicacity had he not realised that this was merely because the time was not ripe.

At this time he received unexpected help from Hapta Giorgis, who eventually became Minister of War. This chief showed statesmanship to an uncommon degree, the one aim of his policy being to keep the unity of Ethiopia. He hated foreigners and was bitterly intolerant of western ideas, but he saw that Tafari was no fool and served him faithfully. Organisation is not native to the Ethiopian character, but once the Regent had convinced Giorgis that success in battle could be better achieved by European

methods, the chief set to work to build up a well-armed and well-disciplined corps of troops in the capital, while still preserving in his soldiers the virtues of mobility and reckless courage which had won victory for Ethiopia on so many fields.

This force waged guerilla war with Lidj Yassu for nearly five years, and so successfully that Yassu never came within striking distance of the capital. It is difficult to reconstruct all the twists and turns of these campaigns, but they culminated in 1921 in a direct attempt by Yassu to regain the throne. That year there was considerable bloodshed, though no pitched battle on a big scale was fought. The final skirmish was won by the inspired use of cavalry.

Lidj Yassu's men had been attacking all day a strongly held ridge of hills, but meanwhile, unknown to them, a picked body of mounted troops had been working round on to their flank. There were thick forests on these adjacent heights but there was one wide grassy valley which reached far up into the tree-clad slopes. This was ideal for a charge, but the problem was how to manœuvre the attackers into such a position that the descent of the horsemen would catch them unawares. If they saw the attack coming they would be able to retreat to rising ground and the whole force of the charge would be lost.

The defenders were at length ordered to advance, but at the last moment this was broken off and a retreat was begun. Lidj Yassu's commanders, thinking that the enemy were weakening called on their men for a last effort and the troops surged forward. But as they crossed the mouth of the valley, the hidden cavalry thundered down upon them.

The sun, which was low in the heavens, lay behind the wild mass of horsemen, dazzling the eyes of the rebels and magnifying the terror of the charge. Before there was time for defence the whirlwind of hoofs and swords and lances, weighted with the huge momentum of frantic animal flesh, cut through the swaying ranks of the valley

forces leaving behind it, in a broad swathe, the slashed and pounded bodies of groaning men. And while the charge reformed on the slope of the further hills, the ridge defenders swarmed down upon the stricken wreckage of the column.

There was no hope save in instant flight, and this was not easy, for while the infantry slew without mercy in the heart of the valley, the horsemen, divided into bands, scoured the fringes of the hills, driving back fugitives to death in the central mêlée. It was ghastly work, but it had to be done. That charge, which will always be remembered, saved Ethiopia from the menace of a return of Islam. Lidj Yassu, who had fled at an early stage of the encounter, was captured and brought before Ras Tafari.

The defeated noble, once the ruler of the country, can have had little hope of his life being spared. By all the rules of Ethiopian warfare his head was many times forfeit to the throne. Nevertheless Ras Tafari spared him. The Regent, sensing his growing hold upon the nation, felt that he could afford to be merciful. It was also possible that the conquered rebel might be held as hostage for the good behaviour of the Galla tribes. So Yassu was sent to Harar where he was interned rather than imprisoned, every luxury being provided for him.

In adversity he showed the better side of his nature, studied a good deal, and charmed all Europeans who met him by the natural courtesy of his manners and the brilliance of his mind. It seemed that the Regent's policy had been a sound one, and that those round him who had urged the execution of Yassu, were wrong. Their case had been that while he lived there would always be a dangerous claimant to the throne, whose cause any disgruntled chief or foreign enemy of the government might make a pretext for revolt within the kingdom or attack from without. But Ras Tafari refused to listen; he wished to show that he did not fear his rival sufficiently to make it worth his while to execute him. This was a magnanimous

attitude, yet future events were to suggest that it was of doubtful wisdom.

With Zawditu, the first Empress of Ethiopia since the time of Sheba, said the priests, firm upon the throne, Ras Tafari found time to devote himself to his books. This does not mean that he could retire for any length of time into his library but merely that instead of dealing with affairs of State every moment of his waking day, he was able to find a few hours now and then for literary labour. But he had always to be ready to deal with trouble, for certain of the chiefs openly expressed their contempt for him, and contempt is soon defiance.

He was able, however, to teach one of them a lesson in most salutary fashion, after which there was a noticeable increase in the respect with which the new regime at Addis Ababa was treated.

In one of the Shoan provinces a local chief had been indulging in extortion. The complaints had reached Ras Tafari through a European trader since the victims were too terror stricken to protest themselves. The Regent sent to enquire why it was that more than the legal amount of produce was being levied and received the reply that the law provided that any man who concealed his possessions from the tax gatherer might rightly be fined double or, for a further offence, treble the original tax. There had, the chief explained, been an epidemic of evasion in his province and he had merely been enforcing the law.

Ras Tafari congratulated him on his zeal and pointed out that the law also provided that a large proportion of any such fine should come to the central government. The chief agreed that this was so, but explained that for the enforcement of the Emperor's decrees among the lawless he had been forced to go to greater expense than his humble resources could stand. The fines which he had collected he had sequestered to reimburse himself for these expenses, which had been occasioned by his zeal in the service of the State.

Still friendly in tone the Regent expressed his sympathy for the chief, and stated that he was concerned to know that there was such disorder in his district. For the better regulation of these matters a conference must be held immediately. Then arrangements could perhaps be made for help to be given him. No man should say that he was ruined in the service of the Government. Would the chief report at once to the capital that there might be an enquiry into this unhappy state of affairs?

Meanwhile the Regent had been collecting indisputable evidence of the chief's wrongdoing which he planned to place before him at the suggested council. The chief was wary, however, and respectfully and with a variety of ingenious excuses managed to evade the summons. There were crops to be reaped, his daughter was to be married, there was a cattle thief still at large . . . and so on. And the exactions continued nor was any money paid to the State.

At last the Regent lost patience and no longer asked but commanded. In the name of Menelek the recalcitrant chief was bidden to present himself before his ruler upon a certain day.

He came, but he brought close on a thousand picked fighting men with him. They camped at the gates of the capital and sang songs extolling their prowess. They were careful not to commit any act of hostility, but showed plainly by their manner that they served their own Ras rather than the Government and that they were not to be trifled with.

Ras Tafari did not trifle with them. On the day of their arrival he sent out a courteous message of welcome, which was interpreted by the chief as a sign that the Regent surrendered. His surprise may be imagined therefore when he found the next morning that during the night the State troops had stolen out soundlessly from the city and encircled him. Rifles and machine guns bristled on the crest of every hill. A wrong move on his part would have been the signal for deadly fire.



The chief gave in. He discovered that much of his ammunition had been brought as a present for the noble Ras Tafari, Ruler of all Ethiopia, defender of the most holy faith. Ras Tafari accepted the gift with every expression of gratitude, gave other, but less dangerous, gifts in exchange, and sent back a very chastened chieftain to his province with instructions in future to obey the law and not to extort by means of alleged fines any more. It is also on record that the correct proportion of the "fines" which he claimed to have gathered was paid to the Regent out of the chief's own pocket. The suavity and general gentlemanliness with which the whole affair had been conducted appealed very strongly to the taste of the Amharic population with whom the Regent's reputation immediately rose.

In considering the strained relations which soon developed between the Regent and the Empress Zawditu, it must be remembered that factions in the capital were doing everything possible to stir up discord between them. Indeed, had they been similar in temperament and outlook and not very different, they could scarcely have hoped to have agreed for long.

Zawditu was the rallying point for all the forces of reaction in Ethiopia. The priesthood were her especial friends and were fanatically opposed to the spread of education on which the Regent had set his heart. Ras Tafari did his best at first to win them by showing them his great interest in the ancient books of the country. He urged that if these books were printed and people taught to read them it would strengthen the forces of religion and make for the glory of God. The priests considered the matter, and replied, just as many a reactionary English squire must have done within living memory, that God was worshipped in the heart and that no learning was required to pray to Him.

The Coptic Church had one unbroken rule—the Abuna must be a monk who had spent his life in seclusion. The purpose behind this was that he should be pure in

mind and body—a very laudable ideal. In effect the result was that over many generations the heads of the Church had been rarely pure and always ignorant. It was difficult to prevent the snares of the flesh from entering a monastery, but all enlightenment was effectually excluded. Even actual ability to read the scriptures was sometimes lacking, and of the learning of the western world there was known nothing at all.

Against the invincible ignorance of the Coptic Church, which had in Zawditu so firm an ally, Ras Tafari struggled manfully and not in vain. He was always very careful to observe minutely the various ceremonies which the priests and people expected to be performed by the ruler of the country, and thus the priesthood had never any chance to accuse him of neglecting or undermining the Faith. This indeed he had no wish to do, since he regarded the Church as a wonderfully unifying force among his people and was a keenly religious man, though redeemed to a great extent from superstition by his knowledge of science.

His sensitive mind delighted in the beauties of his Church ritual, and he took intense pleasure in the quaint though exceedingly fine illustrations with which the old religious books were plentifully supplied. But he found the priesthood adamant when he wished to extend his learning to the common people.

“Books are holy things,” said the Etchege when drawn into a discussion of printing, “but if you have many of them they will become so common that no one will consider as wisdom what is to be found within their covers. Thus God will be insulted and profaned, so that He is certain to visit His wrath upon us.”

One very interesting development of this argument was found among the priests. They said that there was holy power in the sacred books—that is, power to charm away illness and to protect against foes. Now either this holy power was not passed on to a copy—in which case why make a copy which was clearly a sham and a deceit;

or the power was passed on. And this was serious—for if the power of a sacred book was to be shared among a thousand copies surely it would become so little that it would be of use to none. And since the safety of the land depended upon the power residing in the scriptures, surely the whole realm would be imperilled if they were tampered with and copied by the thousand.

This view, that if a copy of anything is made some part of the virtue of the original must reside in it—so that the original is harmed—is, as students of magic will recognise, a very widespread belief among primitive tribes. It has been said that there were within living memory fishermen on the coast of Scotland who refused to let tourists sketch them—quoting the cases of friends of theirs who, having had their picture done, never had another day's health in their lives. It is also well known that one of the principles of witchcraft which crops up all over the world is that if you make an image of anything you can, if you know the correct formulae, cause damage which you do to the image to be reproduced upon the original. For instance a wax model of your enemy left to melt before a fire will cause his life to ebb away in time with the gradual melting. This was an argument used against printing—that if copies of the sacred books got into wrong hands powerful witchcraft might be set in motion against the word of God.

Against perverted logic of this sort the Regent had constantly to struggle, with Zawditu always on the opposing side. That he was able to carry through so many reforms is greatly to his credit for the odds were heavily against him. Those who call to-day for greater speed of progress can have little knowledge of the obstacles which lie in its path.

With increasing age Zawditu became a morose and unhappy woman. Her married life had been unsatisfactory, and during her reign the personal troubles of her past occasionally reared up in awkward forms. Her first marriage (in 1882 before her father had secured control

of the whole country) had been to Ras Areya Selassie, the son and heir of the Emperor John. This was part of Menelek's scheme for a series of dynastic alliances which would result in the gradual bringing of the various kingdoms of Ethiopia under one rule. The marriage was not very happy, for her father usurped the inheritance of her husband. When Ras Areya Selassie died in 1901, Menelek again thought of his daughter as a pawn in his plans for the better union of his territories and did his best to marry her to Guangoul, the son of a famous chieftain of the Wollo Gallas. Negotiations were entered into and the settlements were arranged when the young man, having seen his bride to be, frankly refused to go on with the matter. So obstinate was his resistance that neither the threats of his father, Ras Gobana, a mighty warrior, nor the fear of the wrath of Menelek, availed. Menelek, who had offered an extremely generous marriage portion with his daughter, was mortally offended by this refusal and salved his wounded honour by fining Ras Gobana heavily for breach of contract. That the fine was paid is an index of Menelek's power, but as can be imagined the incident left many unpleasant feelings in the minds of all concerned.

Zawditu was married again hurriedly in the same year so that she should not appear to be a rejected woman. Her husband was one of Menelek's generals, the Dedjes-match Ube. She was not happy with him and he divorced her three years later; nor was her marriage with Ras Gugsä, the nephew of Queen Taitu, any more successful. He divorced her in 1910 and afterwards gave her a good deal of trouble, raising a revolt against the Regent in 1930, with the object, it is said, of remarrying Zawditu and getting possession of the throne.

The unhappy married life of Zawditu was possibly accounted for by her exaggerated affection for her father which made all other men seem poor specimens at best. The unhappiness which she experienced undoubtedly poisoned her life and made her very difficult to get on

with. It is said that she hated Ityi Manen, the wife of the Regent, and did her best to provoke a rupture between man and wife.

Every day she requested an interview with Ras Tafari, and forced him to report to her minutely concerning all that he had done. Any appointments, however trivial, she insisted on making herself, and as her nominees were rarely the persons best fitted for the work the efficiency of the administration was considerably interfered with. Late in life she became very capricious in the bestowal of rewards, and also suffered from unreasoning hatreds which caused great disturbance. But till this time she had been a very capable administrator of her own property and was well liked by her servants who, though they feared her, recognised in her iron rule the will of the great Menelek, and were forced to admit that she was fair in her dealings with them except when moved to passion. These fits of rage, inherited or perhaps copied from her father (bad temper is usually deliberately worked up), made life unbearable for Ras Tafari, and it is even thought that she went so far as to plot his death by poison. Of this fact there is no confirmation.

Tafari showed great dignity in dealing with her outbursts, and was indeed secretly glad that her unreasonable conduct was alienating the chiefs and bringing them round to his side. He longed to travel, and in 1923, in a peaceful interval, he started off on a tour of the European world. But though he was received everywhere with great cordiality he knew that there was trouble ahead of him, for certain boundaries of his country were still undefined and he had inherited from Menelek a dangerous feud.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FEUD WITH ITALY

THE first battle between the Abyssinians and the invading Italians took place in 1887. The events leading up to this clash are worth study, as they reveal the nature of the long and bitter quarrel. In 1870 the port of Assab, about fifty miles north of Aden on the Eritrean shore of the Red Sea, was purchased by an Italian company from the local Sultan. It was extremely doubtful whether he had the right to sell outright land which, though he controlled it, was vested by old-established customs in his tribe; but there was no one powerful enough to protest so the deal was completed. The company did not do a very important trade, but continued nevertheless to acquire land in the neighbourhood of the town whenever possible. A large purchase was made in 1879, and a further tract acquired the following year. Trade did not improve at all, and in 1882 the Italian Government, whose help the company had repeatedly solicited, sent out Count Pietro Antonelli with instructions to examine the whole position, estimate the possibilities of the port, and conclude, if that proved possible, favourable trading agreements with the Sultan of Aussa, through whose lands, which lay to the south of the inhospitable Danakil country and were far more productive, the trade routes reached the powerful kingdom of Shoa. The Count was able at length to open negotiations with both Menelek of Shoa and his rival the Emperor John, who held the rich lands of the Tigre province to the northward, and there is reason to believe that the discussions might have led to profitable agreements, since both rulers needed outlets to the sea; but in 1885 news came that the Italians had occupied the port of Beilu,

about thirty miles to the north of Assab and had taken over from the Egyptians the much more important port of Massawa, some 250 miles further to the north.

These moves caused great suspicion in the minds of the Abyssinians, who foresaw that should the Italians gain a monopoly of the coastline they might be in a position to impose heavy dues or at any rate to keep down prices.

In 1884 the Egyptian Government, in conjunction with Great Britain, had sent a trading mission to Abyssinia and had promised among other things that Massawa should be a free port. The arrival of the Italian General Gene, who advanced inland with a detachment of 500 troops, was thus interpreted by the Abyssinians as a threat to the recent agreement with Egypt, and when the General refused to retire he was surrounded and attacked.

It must be made clear that there was not the least suggestion of treachery or ambush about this attack as has sometimes been implied from Italian sources. To the Abyssinians the situation was clear. The Italians were advancing on to their territory and refusing to retreat when this was demanded of them. They were therefore hostile invaders and had to be dealt with accordingly. This first clash took place at Dogali in 1887. The Italian casualties exceeded 400, from which it may be gathered that their defeat was complete. They were surrounded and outnumbered, and but for the fact that at the same time King John was also compelled to meet invasion by the Egyptian Dervishes along his northern frontier, the entire Italian force might have been wiped out.

The British Government were very disturbed that this fighting should threaten the trade agreement which had recently been concluded and did everything in their power to arrange terms between the conflicting parties, but the situation was complicated by the attitude of the Dervishes and by internal rivalries in Ethiopia, while the Italians did not appear willing to negotiate and were massing their forces. Mr. Gerald Portal, who was in charge of the

attempts at mediation, concluded that nothing could be done and at length returned to Egypt, having braved considerable danger to no avail.

Freedom of trade was a fixed point in the policies of both Menelek and John. In 1887 John died in battle with the Dervishes, and Menelek gained control of both kingdoms. Count Antonelli, who was actually at his court at the time, seized the opportunity to conclude a treaty. The Count was an able diplomatist but his attempts to arrange for trading concessions had been hindered by the strife between Tigre and Shoa. He was glad that this was now to be ended, and taking advantage of the fact that Italian military operations had so far resulted only in conflict with King John, and could thus be represented as of advantage to Menelek, he persuaded the Emperor to accept Italian friendship and offer trade facilities in return.

Menelek, who had numerous internal difficulties to contend with, was glad to have powerful friends. By the treaty of May 2nd, 1889—usually referred to as the Ucialli treaty—he allowed the Italians various privileges, appointed Ras Makonnen (the father of the present Emperor) plenipotentiary in Rome, and was guaranteed Italian support against rebels.—As has been related the visit of Ras Makonnen to Europe, where he carried out important duties in London, Paris and Rome, was a turning point in Ethiopian history. He was a great thinker as well as an honest and able negotiator. His travels inspired him with a vision of what his country might become. His reports were the first beginnings of a European attitude at Addis Ababa, and he laid the foundations of policy which his son was afterwards to build on so successfully. Previously Ethiopians had considered strict isolation, for which Nature had provided every facility, the only way in which the integrity of their country might be preserved. Ras Makonnen saw that to stand out against the unconquerable march of civilisation was impossible and could only lead to absorption by some



European power. He saw that the best interests of Ethiopia lay in fitting herself as rapidly as possible to take her place in the Western scheme.

Ras Makonnen's study of history had filled him with profound misgivings as to the future for he had learned how one by one the countries of Africa and Asia had been seized and exploited by the great imperial powers.

After the treaty of Ucialli was concluded, Menelek first thought that he could consider his foreign policy as settled for some years to come; but he soon had reason to suspect that under cover of their professions of friendship the Italians were preparing either to get him completely into their power or to replace him by some more amenable chief.

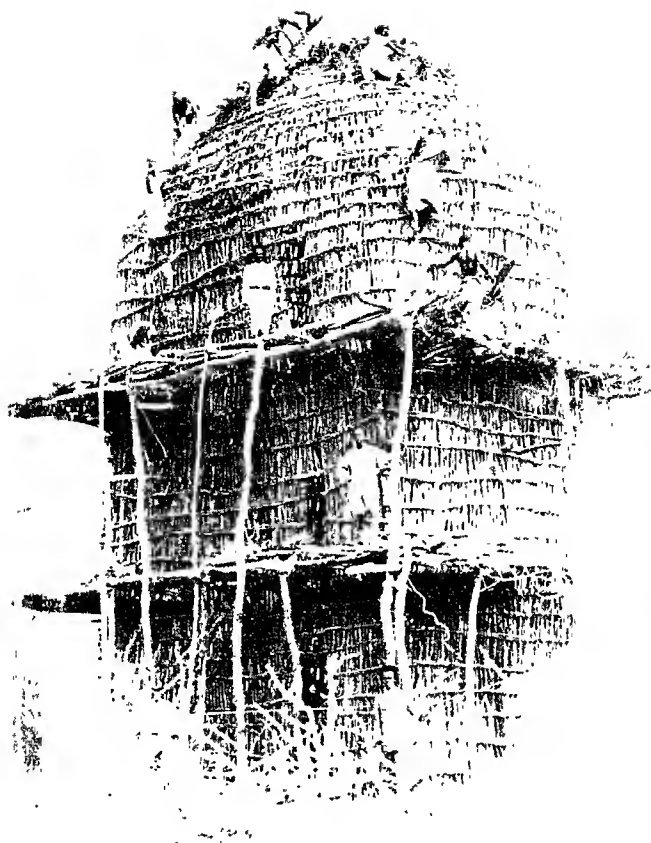
The occupation of Asmara by the Italians gave them a base some forty miles inland and it was reported to Menelek that there was great activity in the town. What worried him most, however, was the fact that in their new policy of friendship and conciliation they were making constant overtures to Mangasha, a local chief who was said to be the son and the appointed heir of King John.

It seemed to Menelek that there was danger to his regime in such a friendship, but in thinking this he was doing Mangasha a great injustice. This chief, though he might well have sided with the Italians in return for their support of his claim to the throne of Tigre, recognised the ties of blood as of greater consequence than his personal ambitions. He gave Menelek faithful service, informing him of Italian movements, and later fought with great bravery in the Adowa campaign.

For three years after the signing of the treaty there was an uneasy peace in Ethiopia. Menelek strengthened his position, showing great statesmanship in his treatment of the tributary tribes, and trade improved considerably. But it was not long before his suspicions of Italian duplicity were shown to be well grounded.



THE TREACHEROUS MISTS WHICH SURROUND THE MOUNTAIN BARRIERS OF ETHIOPIA



TWO-STOREYED TUKL  
A master-piece of woodwork

The making of a treaty with a people whose language and general standards are widely different from those of Europe naturally presents certain difficulties, and Amharic is admittedly an awkward tongue for rendering into a Latin language; but it is hard to believe that the difference of opinion concerning the Ucialli agreement which was now revealed was entirely the result of genuine error. While in Europe Ras Makonnen was in touch with several representatives of great powers, one of whom, an Englishman, showed him a note which had been circulated by Italy to the other European nations. This said that Ethiopia, having accepted the protection of Italy, had agreed that all communications with others powers should take place through Italian channels.

Ras Makonnen was astonished when this note was shown to him, as it appeared inconceivable that Menelek should have agreed to what was in effect the handing over of his country to Italian control. He communicated at once with Menelek and the Amharic version of the treaty was carefully examined. The only clause which could have provided any basis for the Italian note was discovered, but the Amharic version made it plain that it contained no sense of compulsion. Rather its sense was that the Emperor *might*—presumably as a favour—avail himself of Italian services when dealing with other European nations. There was nothing to suggest that he was compelled to do so; nor was there any abdication of sovereignty such as the Italian note had apparently inferred.

It is related that the Italian representative in Addis Ababa, when called on to explain the treaty, produced an Italian draft in which the disputed clause was definitely compulsory in character, and proceeded to adopt a threatening attitude at what he described as a breach of good faith on the part of the Emperor. He pointed out that Menelek's hold upon his country was far from sure and that serious consequences might follow any withdrawal of Italian favour. When Menelek, who was furious at

finding himself manœuvred into such a position, and who resented as the bitterest of insults any suggestion that he had parted with independence, intimated that he cared nothing for Italian friendship, the Italian envoy's patience was exhausted and he showed his hand. This, he said, flourishing his own draft, was the treaty as Italy understood it, and any denunciation of its terms could only be followed by war.

The exact course of this interview is difficult to reconstruct, but it appears that the Empress was present and that the tone of the envoy's remarks was interpreted by her as a personal insult. At all events she seized the offending treaty and tore it in pieces, with which climax the audience presumably concluded.

In seeking for the exact truth of this affair the impartial historian is in a difficulty, for there have been copious justifications from the Italian side and very little comment from Ethiopia. That Menelek in the earlier stages of his reign was glad enough to make concessions to Italy in return for support is certain, and a cynical view would be that later, when he felt more secure, he seized the first opportunity of ridding himself of irksome obligations. That, roughly, is the Italian view. It overlooks first Menelek's known character, which was not such as would permit him to sign away, no matter for what purpose, any vestige of power; and it begs the question of the conflicting drafts. Clearly it was the duty of the Italian experts to see that the Amharic version tallied with the other.

The Italian translation reads:

"(The Emperor) . . . will avail himself of the Italian Government for any negotiations in which he may enter with any other Powers or Governments."

This wording, while it is quite easy to understand that to the Italians it implied a virtual protectorate, is hardly very forceful in meaning, and it is plain that Menelek may well have signed it without the least appreciation of its possible significance.

In the year 1891 Britain and Italy signed two agreements in which Abyssinia was mentioned as an Italian sphere of influence—presumably on the strength of the Ucialli treaty, and Ras Makonnen was compelled to warn Menelek that his country was being partitioned by the European powers as though its loss of independence was already regarded as an accomplished fact. As a result of this Menelek in 1893 denounced the treaty of Ucialli, saying: "My empire is powerful enough to ask no protection and to exist in freedom."

This denunciation of the treaty had no effect on the European Powers and in a further agreement between Britain and Italy signed in the following year the same assumption appears—Italy is recognised as having prior claims on Abyssinia.

But France was determined to stake a claim, and in the same year the *Compagnie Impériale des Chemins de Fer Ethiopiens* was granted a concession to build a railway from Jibuti to Harar. The story of this railway is instructive for it resulted in the most complicated financial manœuvres. The syndicate which had originally planned the line was assured unofficially of government backing and thus pushed on with the undertaking even when it became clear that owing to the disturbed state of the country the traffic receipts might not justify for many years the huge initial expenditure. After six years of ceaseless difficulty, for the surroundings of Jibuti (one of the hottest places in the world) are such that heavy labour is bound to proceed slowly, about 300 kilometres of line were completed, serving no useful purpose. By this time the funds of the company were completely exhausted and appeals for help were made to the government of France. This had, it appears, been secretly promised on several occasions during the construction of the line, but had been slow in forthcoming. When, however, it became known that British capitalists had been interested in the venture and that the line was on the point of passing out of French control, the Colonial

Party in France was able to force the Government's hand, and in February, 1902, a convention was signed by which the company was granted an annual subsidy from the State of half a million francs. This was to last for fifty years. The concession for the line was for ninety-nine years, of which ninety years had still to run.

Once again Menelek had brought home to him the difficulty of preserving independence when dealing with Europeans. He had granted the concession to a private company. He now found himself dealing with a Government.

At first he withheld his sanction from the proposal, but it was soon clear to him that the best interests of his country would be served by the completion of the line, and in 1904 he authorised the construction of the track as far as Addis Ababa.

In 1906, under the well-known Tripartite Treaty, it was agreed that an extension of the railway to the Sudan should be undertaken by British capital while the Italians should be free to build lines both to Eritrea and Somaliland.

It is easy to picture Menelek, by this time somewhat confused by a maze of agreements and counter-agreements, through which the keen mind of Ras Makonnen was steering him, feeling that his only hope of preserving territorial integrity lay in playing off the various powers one against the other. In 1902 he had signed with Great Britain a treaty which settled the boundary line between Abyssinia and the Egyptian Sudan and definitely established certain British rights in that region irrespective of Italian claims. The most important provision of this treaty concerned the Blue Nile and read:—

*Article III.* The Emperor Menelek engages not to construct or to allow to be constructed any work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tsana or the Sobat which would arrest the flow of their waters into the Nile except in agreement with the governments of Great Britain and the Sudan.

The promise was also made that a trading post should be granted to the British for the purpose of controlling

commerce with the Sudan, and later, after some discussion, this post was established at Gambela in the heart of the Wallega country, about eighty miles from l'Akobo, which marks the extreme western limit of Ethiopia. Permission was also granted to Great Britain to connect the Sudan with Uganda by means of a railway passing through Abyssinian territory.

It was the possibility of confusion being caused by the existence of conflicting concessions which led the three great Powers which were manœuvring to obtain a hold on Abyssinia to frame a three-cornered agreement in 1906. But before this time the situation had been completely altered by the battle of Adowa.

The advance of General Napier, which has already been described, had been apparently so easy that the Italians were of the opinion that no great difficulties would be presented in a campaign against Menelek. They overlooked two most important points: first, that the Napier expedition had been aided not only by disgruntled chiefs but by the spontaneous assistance of the people who were terrified and disgusted by the brutalities of Theodore. Second, that even with this help the journey to Magdala had been far more difficult than it appeared, and that only amazingly good staff work had enabled the force, with all its elephants, camels, mules and several thousand native porters to cover the ground. On several occasions during the 360 miles of march provisions had been a serious problem and there had been constant difficulty with water supplies.

It is usual to dismiss the Adowa campaign as a piece of utter folly on the part of an inexperienced commander, who pushed forward into unknown territory with a force far too small for the work entrusted to it and which was further weakened by division into three columns. This is by no means the case, as a careful examination of all the facts will show. The Italian general, though guilty of errors (which are naturally magnified by tacticians



since the defeat which followed them was so terrible) was neither inexperienced nor a fool. Nor was the victory of the Ethiopians a foregone conclusion owing to their tremendous numbers.

General Baratieri bore a high reputation. He had served with distinction under Garibaldi, and such was his charm of manner that he was as popular with his men as with the social circles of the Italian capital. Sent out to Eritrea, he had, while still a colonel, co-operated with Colonel Arimondi, who, in December, 1893, had inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Dervishes at Agordat, 100 miles inland from Massawa; and he had followed up this victory by a forced march to Kassala (some ninety miles farther and just across the border of the Sudan) which had been rightly hailed as a brilliant military achievement.

This had effectually checked the raids of the Dervishes, but on returning to Massawa Baratieri discovered that his rear was menaced by the movements of Mangasha (of whom there has already been mention), whom he suspected of having intrigued with the Sudanese raiders.

There is little evidence that Mangasha had done this, and in view of the hatred which existed between both Tigre and Amhara and their Dervish neighbours it is extremely unlikely that Baratieri's suspicions were well-grounded. His chief cause of complaint against the chief was that he refused to intrigue against Menelek, but that could hardly be publicly stated. Mangasha was probably less of an intriguer than most men in his position would have proved, and though his attack on the Italian rear was naturally timed to take place while the trouble in the north was engaging the attention of Baratieri's main forces, it is difficult to believe that this was pre-arranged with the Sudanese.

Mangasha was attacking in consequence of the Italian threats which had followed the tearing up of the Ucialli treaty. Menelek knew that an attack was meditated by the Italians and that it would be bad tactics merely to

wait for it, since every arrival of reinforcements improved the chances of the invaders. He had thus ordered Mangasha to move forward and was hastening north to support him with an army which has been estimated at 100,000 men and certainly consisted of 60,000.

The worst mistakes of generals are nearly always traceable to unreasonable demands for quick results on the part of the politicians. It was so with General Baratieri (for he had newly received promotion) and the blame for what followed must be shared by the wire-pullers in Rome. There was no appreciation whatever by the Government of the state of the lines of communication in Eritrea. The general had only 20,000 troops, of whom little more than half were Italians, and the necessity for constant watchfulness on the primitive supply bases reduced considerably the effective force available for an advance.

The first warning came when an advance column, which had pushed forward through the hills to Makale, was forced to surrender for lack of supplies. This news was very ill received in Rome and Baratieri did not improve matters by his explanation. It was quite true that he had telegraphed orders for the battalion to retire and for reserves to move up in support, and that owing to loss of one order and the delay of the other there had been confusion for which he was not personally responsible. But commanders should never explain the reasons for their errors, and it probably indicates a weakness for self-justification in Baratieri's character that he should have done so.

At all events it gave his enemies in Rome a chance to intrigue against him and a new commander was suggested. Learning this—rumour has it through the letter of a society woman, once a dear friend of his, who sent him the news of his disgrace and begged him to do something brilliant at once in order to save his reputation, Baratieri gave the order to advance.

From that moment, say the strategists, he was lost.

This is not altogether true. What was his alternative? Clearly an ignominious retreat, on which Menelek's forces might well have overtaken him. Baratieri knew quite well that his advance was under the circumstances (it is said, for instance, that he had only provisions for ten days and that his ammunition was running short) sheer bluff, but he must have felt that a bold move was called for and might well succeed. To have retreated from the native forces which had just won a victory at Makale in the south would have weakened Italian prestige to such a point that the tribes of the surrounding districts might well have turned against the retiring army. There was a good deal to be said for a forward policy had things been properly managed.

As it was they went wrong from the start. Bad maps, unreliable guides, the deceptive nature of the country, and a heavy morning mist at the critical hour were all contributory reasons for the disaster; but the speed with which the Abyssinians moved, their reckless bravery in the face of heavy fire, and their quickness to take advantage of errors on the part of the Italians were the decisive factors in the victory.

The country round Adowa is not rugged. It consists of rolling hills with here and there a somewhat cone-shaped peak. One peak is very like another and the country between them is particularly difficult to distinguish. Ridge conceals ridge in bewildering fashion, and the main ranges are very puzzling, since they follow no set direction and are thus difficult to grasp. You can see the same sort of thing in parts of Wales and on the edge of the Scottish Highlands.

Baratieri, who was twenty miles from Adowa, where the forces of Menelek were concentrating, decided to occupy a ridge of hills between the two armies. He would thus put the Italians on the defensive in the actual fighting, and yet at the same time be able to claim that he had advanced to meet the enemy.

To seize the ridge it was necessary to make a night

march, but as the country was not difficult for marching and the distance only some ten or twelve miles no great trouble was expected. For the march the forces were divided into three columns, the objectives of these bodies being three crests in the ridge ahead. The central crest was Mount Belah and that to the right was named the Spur; but the hill to the left had no name on the maps and the guides seemed uncertain as to what it was called. In his orders to his staff, the General had named it Kidane Meret, but this, as it subsequently turned out, was the name of a hill several miles farther on, a position much more exposed.

During the night all went well on the march, for the native guides proved very efficient, but it was difficult to maintain communications between the three columns as there were not enough guides for the work and it could hardly be entrusted to soldiers who would almost certainly have been lost once they left their line of march. There was thus practically no contact between the three brigades such as would certainly have prevented the misunderstanding which developed in the morning.

Shortly after dawn Brigadier Albertone, who was in charge of the ill-fated column of the left, having safely posted his men on the hill which had been pointed out to him as his objective, scanned the neighbouring hill-sides for signs of the rest of the Italian force. There were mists around the various summits and heavy vapours in the valleys, but the adjoining hill where the centre column should by that time have been stationed was clearly visible—deserted. Had Albertone been in touch with the centre during the night he would have known that they had been slightly delayed. As it was he gained the impression that he had made some error, and questioned the guides as to whether he was on Kidane Meret. They, of course, told him no, that Meret was some miles farther on; and Albertone, thinking that he was lagging behind, hastily got his troops on the move again and occupied Meret by sunrise.

The mists rolled away, and to the Brigadier's surprise he found himself separated by some ten miles from the centre column and right in the track of Menelek's advance, which was already commencing. It was too late to retreat, the damage was done. Not only was Albertone's force exposed to overwhelming enemy numbers and utterly unable to avoid being completely cut off, but the flank of the centre column, which the left wing should have been covering, was exposed to attack.

The rest of the story is well known. Within two hours each of the three brigades was surrounded and fighting desperately. At noon there was a pause, and Baratieri, who could not follow the state of the battle and had no despatches, was compelled to abandon all thought of saving his advanced left and ordered a general retreat. It is difficult to see what else he could have done, but the Abyssinians, whom he had thought temporarily checked, resumed the attack with increased ferocity now that they saw that they were winning, and within an hour there were signs that discipline was breaking in the Italian ranks. Their only chance of retreating safely was to fight doggedly back to back, but at this critical moment they broke and fled. Here and there a gallant square formed round an officer and died fighting to the last man and giving an excellent account of themselves; but most were caught in their headlong flight, and the rout soon became a massacre.

That there were atrocities committed by the victorious troops is possible; but the worst stories are told of the native tribes in the surrounding country who, with their womenfolk, were guilty of hideous barbarities.

The most reliable figures of this engagement give the Italian losses, prisoners and casualties, as ten thousand. It was given out at the time that the army of Menelek had only three thousand dead. Later estimates of the Ethiopian losses placed them at about three times that figure. Statements that the Italians inflicted enormously heavy losses before they broke line (twenty thousand is

one figure which has been claimed) can be dismissed as quite outside the range of possibility even with a most cursory study of the battle. On the other hand it is unwise to lay too great stress on the errors of the luckless Baratieri. He had a totally inadequate force, and was, it must be remembered, utterly without motor transport, aeroplanes and the modern machine gun. The Emperor, Haile Selassie, who, together with his military advisers, made a careful study of the victory at Adowa, while he believes that the chief reason for the rout of the invader was the splendid fighting qualities of the Ethiopian warrior, and that the victory may thus be repeated, has no illusions concerning the new factors which science has introduced into the military equation.

The sequel to Adowa is soon told. To avenge the defeat, General Baldassera advanced from the coast as soon as possible with every man he could muster, but Menelek was wise enough to see that the best tactics now were gradual retirements aiming at drawing the Italians farther into the hills. In any case he was hard put to it to feed his huge army and wanted for reasons of internal policy to disband his forces without undue delay. He knew the difficulties and dangers of keeping so large a mass of men under arms.

The Italians proved unwilling to be lured to destruction in the mountain passes, and having relieved the town of Adigrat without opposition were glad enough to conclude peace with Menelek on his own terms. There was scarcely a skirmish in the rest of the campaign.

By the treaty of Addis Ababa signed in the October of the same year, the Ucialli Treaty was revoked and the absolute independence of Ethiopia recognised by Italy. There remained, however, the question of the demarcation of frontiers, and it was this which was to occasion in the years to come a gradual renewal of the tactics of bluff and chicanery by which the wrath of the great Menelek had been so dangerously roused.

As for the Emperor, his victory at Adowa increased

his prestige to such an extent that he came to be considered as directly inspired by God. "The guardian angel of Menelek" became a phrase to conjure with. To-day, many years after his death, the magic of his name still holds complete sway over the imagination of his people, while any Ethiopian warrior of ripe age, under the influence of sufficient good wine will almost certainly proclaim to the world at large: "I was at Adowa! I killed our enemies! Like this! Like this! Like this! . . ."

If any evidence were required that Ethiopia has no designs upon the Italian colonies and is prepared to live in peace with her neighbours provided always that her integrity is respected, it is the attitude of Menelek in 1896. As has been shown he made no attempt to push back the boundary of Eritrea towards the sea. The coastal strip about fifty miles in width from Fatima to Assab has practically no habitable value being largely salt desert of the most inhospitable kind. It is the stretch of plateau between Adi Kaie (30 miles due south of Massawa) and Om Agar (on the Sudan border) that gives colonial value to Eritrea, apart from the fact that a certain amount of trade seeks an outlet through the seaports which Italy holds.

There were many Ethiopians who considered Menelek at fault in not requiring that the plateau should be taken once again within his country's boundary at the time when the victory of Adowa had placed him in so strong a position that he could doubtless have dictated exemplary terms. When it was clear that the present conflict was inevitable and that these high lands were being made use of as a starting point of a great drive into Abyssinia, the Emperor Haile Selassie said many times, gazing at the map before him, "We should never have let them become established on our mountains. The hills are our natural frontier. They could never have hoped to attack successfully from the plains. . . . Menelek was so great an Emperor. Why did he make this one mistake?"

Menelek was probably of the opinion that with the

signature of the treaty of Addis Ababa the threat from Italy was over and done with; and, in the years that followed, the swift rise of British prestige in the Sudan following the cleaning up of the Dervish menace created the opinion in Ethiopian government circles that Britain was the power whose good graces were most to be courted and whose penetration was most to be feared.

The frontier settlements made by Menelek are an interesting study. In 1897 he made treaties not only with Italy (regarding the Somaliland frontier) but also with France concerning her Somaliland territories; and with Great Britain concerning the movements of nomad tribes in the province of Ogaden. This last treaty was the work of Rennell Rodd and has always been regarded as a triumph of straightforward negotiation on both sides.

The Abyssinian cattle have a very poor time during the dry season when lands which have been almost swamp during the rains change rapidly to arid, scorched wastes, only a little brown grass remaining here and there. It is thus a matter of life and death to the tribes to have access to such pasture as remains and to move freely in search of it. Nature pays no attention to man-made frontier lines, and in the regions along the British Somaliland frontier it was impossible to restrain the movements of the tribes by allotting certain areas to each and insisting that the boundaries were respected, since year by year the position of the last remaining dry season pasture varied. A tribe might easily find themselves pastureless and yet barred by the boundary line from grazing lands which were untenanted. It was necessary that in times of drought tribes should be able to move inland in search of grass and wells as they had done for centuries before the frontier existed.

The problem was one which gave every possible chance for bickering, and it was, in fact, regarded by some officials of both nations as insoluble. Rodd took the line that it had got to be solved or there was no chance of



peace on the frontier. He set himself to the task of working out a solution.

Once good faith was established on both sides the details proved surprisingly easy to adjust, and the resulting agreement, which laid down, in addition to frontier lines, certain principles concerning friendship and the development of trade, has worked fairly well ever since. Nor has the French boundary given rise to any difficulties. As the Emperor Haile Selassie said at the time of the Ual-Ual 'incident' (1934)—Why is it always with Italy that these frontier troubles arise? The question was very much to the point, and there has never been a satisfactory answer.

The 1897 Somaliland boundary treaty with Italy was never published by the Italians, and it was only during the attempted arbitration of the Ual-Ual trouble that the Abyssinian government issued a statement concerning it. The actual line drawn by Menelek on the map, which he handed back signed to Major Nerazinni of the Italian boundary mission, was about 100 miles inland and ran parallel with the Somaliland coast. The Ethiopians admit, however, that the line as agreed upon should have run at a distance inland of 180 miles. The Italians deny now that the line has any significance and seek to enforce 'ethnic criteria' as laid down by the subsequent published treaty of 1908.

This tangle will be dealt with in detail later. It is impossible to resist contrasting the Italian muddle with the workmanlike settlement of a similar, and in fact more difficult problem, arrived at by Rennell Rodd. "Either these Italians are very clumsy people," said a counsellor of the Emperor, "or there is cleverness hidden in their blunderings."

Between 1900 and 1902 there were three further treaties concerning the frontiers (that of 1902 with Great Britain has already been summarised) and then in 1906 came the famous tripartite treaty between Britain, France and Italy, in which, although Ethiopia had not been consulted, elaborate arrangements for her future were made.

It is a liberal education for the citizen of a great imperial power to hear the ironic comments with which the educated Ethiopian of to-day discusses that strange document, and indeed it seems difficult in the light of world opinion in 1935 to understand how so shabby a pact ever came to be made. But it must be remembered that in 1906 it was a quite natural thing for three great European powers to consider an African territory as so much prey to be shared between them. What makes the treaty so amusing, however, even in the light of an imperialist code of conduct, is that before arranging for the division of the spoils, the three powers involved solemnly pledge themselves to preserve the integrity of Ethiopia!

Their reason for doing this is explained quite frankly in the prefatory passage, which runs as follows:

"It being in the common interest of France, Great Britain and Italy, to maintain intact the integrity of Ethiopia, to provide for every kind of disturbance in the political conditions of the Ethiopian Empire, to come to a mutual understanding in regard to their attitude in the event of any change in the situation arising in Ethiopia, and to prevent the action of the three States in protecting their respective interests . . . from resulting in injury to the interests of any of them. . . ."

If anything is plain from this laboured verbiage it is that the word integrity is thought of as implying not independence but 'wholeness' from the administrative point of view. What the powers were afraid of was that after the death of Menelek his empire might fall to pieces and its internal discipline vanish; in which event the work of 'cleaning up' the country would have to be begun afresh with an expenditure of European life and capital.

The rule of Menelek had, in fact, brought his country to a relatively peaceful condition in which it could be taken over en bloc with the least possible trouble. It was important therefore that this 'integrity' should be preserved. If after his death there were rivalries for the

throne it would be a very bad thing for European interests in general were Great Britain, France and Italy to back different chieftains who had claims to the dominions of the great Emperor. This could only result in prolonged struggles with loss of trade and danger to the white man's life and property. Whatever happened in the future all three great powers must unite in supporting the central government. Then, when a stable system of control of the whole country had been achieved, it could be conveniently divided as laid down in the 1906 treaty.

The wording of the more important clauses of this treaty is worth further study:

Article I. France, Great Britain and Italy shall co-operate in maintaining the political and territorial status quo in Ethiopia as determined by the state of affairs at present existing and by the following agreements. . . .

At this point are listed the frontier treaties, nine in all, which had been already concluded, the more important of which have already been dealt with in this chapter.

This list is seen, on closer examination, to have implications much harder to define than at first sight appears. The treaties and protocols enumerated include one made *concerning* Ethiopia and to which she was in no sense a party. It is the 1891 agreement, already mentioned as having been signed between Great Britain and Italy on the strength of the Ucialli Treaty of 1889. In this treaty of 1894 and in a subsequent protocol, practically the whole of Abyssinia is admitted by Great Britain to be an Italian 'sphere of influence.' There seems to be no recognition in the 1906 agreement that the battle of Adowa (1896) has been fought and won, and that in consequence the treaty of Ucialli is no longer in existence. But perhaps there is a guarded, or rather, a hidden reference to these facts in the vital paragraph which follows:

It is understood that the various conventions mentioned in this article do not infringe the sovereign rights of the



# ብርሃንና ሰላም

## LUMIERE et PAIX

ግርግጥ ንጉሥ ተፈሪ መኮንን የኢትዮጵያ ግንባራን አልጋ ወራሽና በሌላ ሥልጣን እንደፈሰሰ ባንፈቀው...

«Sa Majesté le Roi Yéféral Makonnen, profondément désireux de voir régner dans son pays la lumière et la paix, a voulu que ce journal soit intitulé "Lumière et Paix"»

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መድረሳቸውንም ነገር ከጠየቁትም በኋላ ሐኪሙና ስስተማሪው እየተነሡ ይሰታዩባቸውን ይገልጻሉ ፡

ሲኖም ካሁን ቀደም የሥልጣኔ መንገድ ጨልቀው በሕልናቸው ስላልተጸፈው በሁን ዛሬ በወደቁ ይገባል በፍቃዳቸው ይከታተላሉ በገዢ አንድነት በሰላም የሚኖሩበት በክብር ይገኝ ገጣች ብሩ ጊዜ መልካም ሐገብዋ ተፈጽሞአት ያሉታዩ ካልነ ያለፈ ማየት የታወቀ ነው። ገዢና ኗሪን ሐሊሙና አስተማሪው ሲኖም ገባሩ ክብር ይገኝግኝ ብሩ ሃሩም ዘሆን አቀባበል አንድ ተቀባሪቸው ከዚህ ቀጥሎ እንዲፋለፍ ገርብኝ ከሚለው ከተማ ሲደርሱ የክብር ይገኝግኝ ብሩ አሸባሪና የክብር ይገኝግኝ ሰዓት ስለሆነ አሸባሪና የብሩትም በሚረ ጉፈርና በተለየ መሣሪ ተሰልፈው ነበርና አሉድ ዚን ተከተማው በኩል ባንት ሐይቅ ሐይቅ ተቀባለው ተቀን በሰላም በሚገ ሰላሳና ዓፄብ ውነው ከዋሩው ከተማ ሀገረ ሰላም ደረሱ በከተማው ውሥጥና በየመንገዱ ላይ መለቱ የሆነ የደሰታው መግላቱ በግዴራ ተቀብሎ ነበር ፡

በሰዓቱ ተምህርት የሚሰጡትን ከተማ ሰበሰቡ ዘመኑን ገራ ገራና ቀኝ ተሰልፈው ቀመው የሚገባቸውን ሰላም ትሰጡ።

ከሠራዊቱም ባዛት የተነሣ መረታ ተጨናንቃ ነበረችና ክብር ይገኝግኝ ብሩ ሐይ የሆነ የግድርና ልብሳቸውን ለብረው ከትላል አደራዳቸው ወርደው መኪንታቸውን ግረና ቀኝ አደርገው ኔጠና በሆነ ወንበላቸው ተቀምጠው ነበር ። አላፈጽሞ ጥሩ ጥሩ የግንባቱ ተነግሮበት የሚረ የሚገ ወንበራም ተደርድሮበት ግሩም በሆነ ፅጥና ሳንደቅ ዓላማ በሌላም በሚያስደንቅ እስከ አረብ አምረ ክብር ሐሊሙና አስተማሪውም በገዢ ጊዜ ለክብር ይገኝግኝ ብሩ የሚገባቸውን ሰዓትም ልዩተው አምረ በተሰናዳላቸው ወንበር ተተመሉ ። የደገና

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“THE FRONT PAGE,” ADDIS ABABA, THE EMPEROR'S NEWSPAPER  
“LIGHT AND PEACE”



Emperor of Abyssinia, and in no respect modify the relations between the three powers and the Ethiopian Empire as stipulated *in* the present agreement.

The second article provides that the interested powers are to consult together concerning the concessions which they intend to *demand* (the true intentions of the treaty makers are, it is to be feared, shown only too plainly in the use of this word) so that there is no overlapping of concessions with consequent friction and injury to all concerned.

Article III is the sort of clause which diplomatists delight in—the sort which, while apparently limiting action, in reality provides limits which are almost infinitely elastic should it prove expedient at a later date to extend them. It reads thus:

“In the event of rivalries or internal changes in Ethiopia the Representatives of France, Great Britain and Italy shall observe a neutral attitude, abstaining from all intervention in the internal affairs of the country and confining themselves to such action as may be, by common consent, considered necessary for the protection of the Legations, of the lives and property of foreigners, and of the common interests of the three Powers. In no case shall one of the three Governments interfere in any manner whatsoever except in agreement with the other two.”

The operative phrase here is clearly ‘. . . and of the common interests of the three Powers’ which can be stretched to cover action of almost any kind.

Article IV pursues the subject of common action in defence of common interests.

“In the event of the status quo laid down in Article I being disturbed, France, Great Britain and Italy shall make every effort to preserve the integrity of Ethiopia. In any case they shall act together, on the basis of the Agreements enumerated in the above-mentioned article (i.e. the nine protocols listed in Art. I) in order to safeguard:—

- (a) The interests of Great Britain and Egypt in the Nile Basin, more especially as regards the regulation of the waters of that river and its tributaries (due consideration being paid to local interests) without prejudice to Italian interests mentioned in paragraph (b).
- (b) The interests of Italy in Ethiopia as regards Erythraea and Somaliland (including the Benadir) more especially with reference to the hinterland of her possessions and the territorial connection between them to the west of Addis Ababa.
- (c) The interests of France in Ethiopia as regards the French protectorate on the Somali coast, the hinterland of this protectorate and the zone necessary for the construction and working of the railway from Jibuti to Addis Ababa.

The other clauses of interest to-day are Articles VI and VII which deal with the continuation of the railway (which at the time of the treaty had only reached Dire-dawa) and which provide that an Englishman and an Italian shall always be on the board of management of the *Compagnie Impériale des Chemins de Fer Éthiopiens* (together with a representative of the Emperor of Ethiopia) and that in return a Frenchman shall be appointed to the board of any railway which either the Italians or the British may build in the country. East of Addis Ababa the British are to have a monopoly of railway construction, and to balance this the Italians alone are to receive concessions for lines west of the capital.

The question of the smuggling of arms is also dealt with, and it is agreed that the Emperor alone is to have the power to license imports of war materials, while in the enforcement of this ban boats may be searched even within territorial waters if evidence is forthcoming that they are likely to be engaged in the gun-running trade.

This provision is of special interest in view of subsequent events along the coast.

The feelings of Menelek when he learned of the Treaty of 1906 can be imagined. He had fought and won, and now his enemies, provided with powerful allies, were encircling him once more, and quietly arranging the

division of his land. He gave way to a dreadful outburst of anger; then instructed his representative to refuse to admit the legality of a treaty to which the country most concerned had not been party. Later when he found that his protest was unavailing, he made a further pronouncement which, while it did not admit in the least degree the validity of the agreement, placed it on record that the Emperor noted that in the treaty the independence of Ethiopia was specifically guaranteed.

That it was guaranteed in the treaty there can be no dispute; but it is doubtful if the guarantee existed with equal force in the minds of the contracting parties.

While it is no doubt true that judged from pre-war standards the imperialist powers had concluded a very gentlemanly agreement which provided for the inevitable to the benefit of all concerned (including, of course, Ethiopia, who would benefit beyond measure by the developments which European capital would attempt), it is plain that by their action they became in the eyes of Menelek a band of robbers who were to be frustrated by every means in his power. And he soon showed, in fact, that this power was considerable.

In valuing the many complaints which were made in the following years of the difficulty of obtaining concessions and of the obstacles which the central government placed in the way of European enterprise, it must be remembered that in the Ethiopian mind the great powers had by their duplicity forfeited their claim to considerate treatment.

Menelek was eventually persuaded to permit the continuation of the Jibuti railway to Addis Ababa, but the line had still not reached the capital at the time of the Emperor's death. No other concessions for railways were forthcoming; and there was no progress in the building of the Lake Tsana dam, so very much desired by the Governments of Egypt and Great Britain.

In March 1906 Ras Makonnen, who had been Menelek's right hand man in the handling of foreign affairs, died



unexpectedly. His work of opening his country to western enlightenment had been valuable, but it appeared at the time that he had merely played into the hands of his country's enemies and it is said that he was somewhat estranged from his Emperor in the last months of his life. His idea had been that the best way to preserve independence was to open negotiations with as many powers as possible, treating each of them fairly but insisting in return on similar treatment. Ras Makonnen always did business as between equals. He, the representative of a great Emperor, was willing to conclude a bargain with the representative of any other ruling power. He was never arrogant, but quietly and with a perfection of manner which his son has inherited, insisted on the courtesy which he considered due to him, his bearing and personality making a very deep impression on open-minded observers in every capital which he visited.

Gradually the powers were recognising the importance of a foothold in Ethiopia. Great Britain had sent a permanent official 'Minister-Plenipotentiary and Consul General' to Addis Ababa as early as 1897. He was Lieutenant-Colonel Sir J. L. Harrington, who became a very popular figure in the capital. In 1903 the Americans sent a mission for the purpose of concluding a commercial treaty, and two years later a German mission arrived with a similar aim. It is doubtless in the arrival of these missions, who were well-treated by Menelek, that the *raison d'être* of the Tripartite Treaty is to be found. With the commercial interests of the world converging on Ethiopia the old established claimants to influence felt that they had better make some arrangement to stake their claims and combine for mutual support in maintaining them before their 'rights' were seriously challenged.

Those were busy years at Addis Ababa. The influx of foreigners whose governments supplied them with money for the upkeep of prestige led to the first noticeable attempts at westernising the capital. Menelek had bought a motor car, and soon the wondering natives grew accustomed

to the presence of several of these strange monsters in their streets. Country houses with hedged gardens in English fashion appeared on the hills around the town, and a social life on western lines sprang up, which reached its highest achievement in the construction of a race-course. But beneath all this free and easy intercourse there was always perpetual intrigue.

There is no reason to single out the Germans as intriguers but their shrewdness was nevertheless to have awkward consequences for Abyssinia on the outbreak of the World War. There was perhaps no corner of the globe which escaped entirely from the effects of that upheaval and Ethiopia, though it never featured in the war news, was involved, since the Germans had obtained considerable influence over Lidj Yassu, the youthful successor of Menelek, and used him to embarrass the British in adjoining territories. The whole story of this has been told elsewhere in this volume. In referring to it here the only purpose is to suggest by concrete illustration the sort of moves which were continually taking place behind the scenes.

In these years a very shy, but alert and clever child was gazing curiously at the newcomers to his country. No one ever took much notice of him, for after his father's death he was not considered of great importance, since though of royal descent he was not thought of as a possible heir to the throne. He was a rather timid boy to judge from his manner; but those who observed him closely knew that, although the acutely sensitive mind was no stranger to fear, there was a strange ténacity in that keen young brain and a strength of character of no common order. That boy was Tafari Makonnen, one day to reign on the Imperial throne.

It would have been well for Ethiopia had Menelek survived the years of World War. In 1913 he was approaching his seventieth year, having reigned for fifty years, during the latter half of which period he had been ruler of the whole country. He had defeated all his enemies,

both foreign and internal, and had welded a collection of warring kingdoms into one powerful whole. But all observers were agreed that though the power of his name held the realm together it was unlikely that this unity would last long when once the great personality which inspired it no longer sat upon the throne. Great and feared as he was, the Emperor had rarely been free from rebellion in one quarter of his kingdom or another. Mangasha, for instance, a possible successor, who had fought so bravely against the Italians, employed his last years in flaunting independence and defying his Emperor; and though he died in 1906, it was not for some two or three more years that those parts of the country which he had held were finally quieted. Direct proof of the influence of the Italians behind these minor revolts is lacking, but Menelek is known to have held them to blame.

Menelek died, and upon the confusion which followed his passing, there fell in the following year the further confusion of European war using the whole world as its battlefield. Once again Ethiopia was the subject of a secret treaty of which she had no knowledge. It is little to be wondered at that some Europeans have complained that as a race the Abyssinians are distrustful.

It is easy to blame Great Britain for the private pact with Italy, by means of which that country was induced to abandon the Triple Alliance and enter the war on the side of the Allies; but when a country is hard pressed the finer points of conduct cannot be too pedantically insisted upon, and in any case it can be argued that Article XIII of the Treaty of London does not necessarily affect the position of Ethiopia at all since the concessions mentioned are to be made at the expense of Britain and France.

The clause runs as follows:

"In the event of France and Great Britain increasing their colonial territories in Africa at the expense of Germany these two Powers agree in principle that Italy may claim some equitable compensation particularly

as regards the settlement in her favour of the questions relative to the frontiers of the Italian colonies of Eritrea, Somaliland and Libya and the neighbouring colonies belonging to France and Great Britain."

But however innocent the exact wording of this clause may be, the fact is that the Italians both at the time and subsequently interpreted it as reserving Abyssinia for them to 'expand' in, and it was always pointed to by Italy in the disputes that followed as evidence that Great Britain and France were morally bound to support Italian claims.

The Great War ended, the victory of the Allies was unqualified; there only remained the wrangle over the spoils. Italy got very little. All the former German colonies in Africa went to either England, France or Belgium. While it may be argued that Italy had not engaged in the campaigns by which these colonies were won, the plain truth cannot be avoided that she had expected, and had in fact been led to expect, much better treatment. Perhaps her disturbed condition in the years following the War may have led the other great powers to underrate her capacity for successful colonial administration. At all events she felt herself seriously aggrieved, especially since even in these matters so clearly provided for in Clause XIII of the Treaty of London she was a very long while in securing settlement, and then had only very meagre concessions to show for her pains.

During the peace conference of 1919 there were certain negotiations between Great Britain and Italy, particularly with regard to Lake Tsana. The Italians did their utmost to obtain admission of the principle that while the "territorial zone recognised as pertaining to Great Britain in respect of (her) predominant hydraulic interests" had still to be demarcated, the whole region was to be regarded, subject to such demarcation, as an Italian sphere of influence.

This point of view was expressed in a note of November, 1919, in which it was implied that in return for recognition

of her general claims in that region, the Italian Government would support any British claim for a concession to build a dam at the lake and thus regulate the flow of the Nile. British support was at the same time solicited for the concession to Italy of the right to build a railway from Eritrea to Somaliland passing to the west of Addis Ababa.

At that time this feeler from Italy was rejected on the grounds (as was stated later) of "the strong objection felt to the idea of allowing a foreign Power to establish any sort of control over the headwaters of rivers so vital to the prosperity or even to the existence of Egypt and the Soudan."

In 1925, however, after a Labour Government had in the previous year made tentative proposals concerning Lake Tsana to the Ethiopian Government, though without result, the Conservative Government which followed them in office took up the matter *with the Italians* and revived the rejected proposals with only slight alterations. Sir Austen Chamberlain arranged that should England obtain the Tsana Dam Concession the Italians, on undertaking never to tamper with the flow of water into the Nile, should be recognised by Britain as having 'an exclusive . . . economic influence to the west of Abyssinia.' They were also, should they obtain permission for the railway, to be recognised as having exclusive rights in the whole of the territory crossed by the line; while Britain would support their application for any further concessions which they might require. There was trouble over this with the French, who were not consulted, and who claimed that the Tripartite Treaty of 1906 had been violated—which indeed would appear to be the case. Sir Austen took some time to straighten matters out, and eventually was able to assure the House of Commons that the French were mollified. . . . But before the dispute between the Powers had advanced to this stage there had been remarkable developments in the status of Ethiopia. The small, pensive, unnoticed boy who

had watched the first advent of European diplomatists to Addis Ababa, had come to manhood and to a throne. He was not yet sole ruler of his country, but under his control Ethiopia, after a thousand years or more of seclusion, had become once again a recognised member of the comity of nations. Ethiopia had joined 'The League' in 1923, and her territorial integrity was thus no longer guaranteed among themselves (with various private reservations) by three great powers—it was pledged by the fifty-two signatories of the Covenant, that is by almost the whole civilised world.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ETHIOPIA JOINS THE LEAGUE

THOSE readers with a taste for irony will relish the story of the manoeuvres of the great powers which resulted in the admission of Ethiopia to the League of Nations. There was almost a complete reversal of the points of view shown to-day. Great Britain, though a member of the committee which had reported the application to be in order as regarded form, pressed for more thorough examination of the internal state of Ethiopia before the admission was granted; while Italy and France professed themselves entirely satisfied that the Regent, Haile Selassie, both could and would fulfil his obligations, and that his country might properly be admitted without delay to the protection of the League.

A careful reading of the speeches made during the debate must depress beyond measure the idealist student of international affairs. Are these representatives of great nations speaking their minds frankly and are the opinions they express worth consideration, he will ask, or are there hidden policies behind every utterance? There is Count Bonin Longare, delegate of Italy, speaking at the fourth meeting of the League Committee. It has been suggested that arms imported by Ethiopia may reach insurgent tribes in other parts of Africa and that safeguards must be devised against such an occurrence. What does the Count say? He deprecates the anxiety which Britain among others has shown on this ground, urges that Ethiopia can be trusted not to abuse the confidence now placed in her, and that in any case supervision can be effectively maintained from the coast. Clearly no

special reservations need be made concerning the import of arms. . . .

How strangely that utterance reads in the light of present events!

Portugal has suggested that the difficulties which Ethiopia may experience in obtaining arms as the result of the convention of Saint Germain, to which, since she was not an original signatory, she must subscribe as a condition of entry to the League, may, in fact, be a serious obstacle to her in dealing with the slave trade. Count Bonin Longare points out that a special licence can always be given her to import arms for that purpose. He passes on to deal with slavery. It exists admittedly, but care must be taken that exaggerated conceptions do not accompany the use of the word. Slavery as known in Abyssinia is merely a mild form of serfdom . . . and so on.

Turn again to the pages of the dossier League of Nations—Records of the Plenary Meetings of the Fourth Assembly. . . . Minutes of the Sixth Committee. . . . The Count is speaking again. To wait for the abolition of slavery before admitting Abyssinia to the League of Nations would be unfair, he urges. It is precisely the admission of their country to the League which will strengthen the hands of the central government so that slavery can be stamped out swiftly. . . . And France, through her delegate, upholds this point of view.

Britain, on the other hand, is cautious. There is a well-organised and very vocal condemnation of slavery to be faced at home. The wife of a distinguished politician has made it her life's work (an Ethiopian cynic might say her hobby) to urge the suppression of slavery everywhere. But is it this fact which prompts the British hesitancy? The French and Italian journalists think otherwise. Their countries, they say, are executing an astute move in supporting the admission of Ethiopia; they are, in fact, twisting the British Lion's tail. Britain has been getting far too much the best of it in those regions lately. Her influence at Addis Ababa especially



is growing—probably on account of the race track, but nevertheless it grows. She was out to grab Ethiopia in her usual pre-war style, but this move has beaten her. Once let Ethiopia come within the League of Nations and no one can grab her. . . . And so the talk in the lobbies continues, each journalist priding himself on the fact that his point of view is just a shade more cynical than that of the rest.

Regent Haile Selassie, who has set going all this buzz of talk, receives in Addis Ababa the reports that his representatives send him. This is an important matter for him. He has faith in the League, and looks to it for a guarantee of external peace under cover of which he can set to work on his task of modernising and reforming the institutions of his country.

The first reports which he receives show that Britain, Switzerland, Australia and Norway are opposing his admission while four European nations, all with considerable colonial and commercial interests in Africa—France, Belgium, Italy and Portugal, are giving unqualified support; from which it seems clear that the chances are in the Emperor's favour, but he has learned how great is the concerted influence of the British Empire, and expresses the opinion to his councillors that success is by no means certain should there be any hardening of British opposition. It has so frequently been represented that the admission of Ethiopia was a foregone conclusion that it is well to point out that it was only when Great Britain began to show a more accommodating attitude that the success of the Emperor's plans was regarded as certain.

The various documents involved in the procedure are interesting. In their application the Emperor and his advisers did not adopt the suave officialese of some paid European advocate. The request for admission was phrased in national style. It opened thus:

"The Holy Scriptures bear witness that since the year 1500 after Solomon we have been contending with the

heathen—by whom (as may be seen from the map of our country) we are surrounded—for the faith and laws of God and to maintain the independence of our country and the freedom of our religion. . . .

“We know that the League of Nations guarantees the independence and territorial integrity of all nations of the world and maintains peace and agreement among them; that all its efforts are directed towards the strengthening of friendship among the races of mankind; that it is anxious to remove hindrances to that friendship which give rise to wars when one country is offended; and that it causes truth and loyalty to be respected among the nations.”

This document came as a surprise to Great Britain but there is evidence that it was not unexpected in other quarters, though the Emperor had not notified his intentions to any beyond the closest of his advisers. A sub-committee of the League, consisting of Britain, France, Italy, Finland, Persia, Latvia and Rumania, seven in all, was hastily appointed to examine the position. After somewhat lengthy discussion they reported as follows:

- (i) The request is in order as to form.
- (ii) Abyssinia is a sovereign country and has been recognised as such for many years by the Great Powers, several of which have concluded treaties with her.
- (iii) The Abyssinian Government is stable and her frontiers are well defined.
- (iv) The present committee, while unable to determine exactly the extent of effective control of the central authority in provinces distant from the capital, is of the opinion that Abyssinia can be considered as fully self-governed.

There remained only one other point necessary to qualify the Ethiopian Empire for advancement to full League status. It had to be held that her international obligations had always been discharged satisfactorily in the past.

On this point the Committee showed some hesitancy, but there were obviously so many other full members

of the League who would have been embarrassed by a strict enforcement of this condition that it could hardly be pressed against Ethiopia without starting most unwelcome controversies. The chief grounds urged for the negative were familiar—there were the questions of gun-running, slavery, delay in the fulfilment of concessions, and raiding over the borders both for ivory and slaves. It was argued against these that the gun-running was clearly not the wish of the Negus, who would be very much embarrassed by arms reaching insurgent chieftains; that the slavery was not of a cruel nature and was slowly being eradicated; that the delay in the implementing of concessions was a matter in which it was difficult to apportion blame; and that finally the facts seemed to show that the untamed tribes of the border raided not only into neighbouring states but also into Ethiopia, whose central government would be glad to co-operate in their suppression.

The Committee at length reported in guarded terms that while it could not be stated that Abyssinia's engagements had always been strictly fulfilled in the past . . . nevertheless, in order to assist her to overcome the difficulties which might in the past have been obstacles to such fulfilment, the present application for admission to the League might well be granted, subject to certain provisos.

These were:

- "1. Abyssinia adheres to the obligations formulated in Article XI, paragraph 1, of the Convention signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on September 10, 1919, amending the General Act of Berlin dated February 26, 1885, and the General Act and Declaration of Brussels dated July 2, 1890.
- "2. Abyssinia, recognising as binding the system at present established with regard to the importation of arms and ammunition, undertakes to conform to the principles set forth in the Convention and Protocol signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on September 10, 1919, and in particular to the stipulations contained in Article VI of the said Convention.

- "3. Abyssinia declares herself ready now and hereafter to furnish the Council with any information which it may require, and to take into consideration any recommendations which the Council may make with regard to the fulfilment of these obligations, in which she recognises that the League of Nations is concerned."

The Brussels Act of July 2nd, 1890, which was the result of an Anti-Slavery Convention held at Brussels at a time when it had just been revealed that various European powers were profiting from the slave trade, had been an agreement that in order to keep down the abominable traffic and also to prevent possible native risings (to "assist in the preservation of African populations" said the preamble to the Act) there should be no importation of arms into large areas of Central Africa.

This treaty had not been strictly adhered to, and the World War had caused its edges to become extremely blurred. It was therefore re-affirmed and amended by the "Convention for the Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition" signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1919.

Once again there were delays and evasions, and in 1925 the Convention for the Supervision of the International Trade in Arms was signed at Geneva.

It is worth noticing that one of the conditions attached to the signing of both of these agreements was that until a certain number of ratifications had been made they should be inoperative. In neither case were the required ratifications forthcoming. . . . The reasons why this was so offer a fascinating study to the impartial observer of the international scene.

Once again an Ethiopian cynic has pointed out that in 1930 and 1932 roughly thirty per cent of the export trade in arms was Great Britain's.

But this is all a digression, though a necessary one. It shows that there were sufficient uneasy consciences present round the Council table for it to be extremely difficult to press home the case against Abyssinia even

had the case been a good one. Particularly interesting was the statement of the British delegate, who said that . . . "Latterly frontier raids have taken place into British territory. This is certainly not due to any want of good will on the part of the Abyssinian Government but to defective supervision of the traffic in arms in outlying districts."

On September 28th, 1923, the Abyssinian delegate, acting on direct instructions from Ras Tafari, signed a declaration that his country would adhere to the Convention of Saint Germain concerning traffic in arms. The Assembly thereupon recorded a unanimous vote for the admission of Ethiopia to the League of Nations.

The news was flashed to Addis Ababa and was received with great pleasure by the Regent. "By this progressive move," said a British official, congratulating him on the success of his policy, "you have made the frontiers of your country secure. . . ."

#### THE FAMOUS LETTER TO THE LEAGUE.

In June, 1926, three years after the admission of Abyssinia to the League of Nations, it came to the notice of Ras Tafari that Great Britain, France, and Italy, without the least pretence of consulting him, had come to an arrangement among themselves as to how the development of Ethiopian territories was to be shared among them.

The letter which the Regent sent to the League of Nations—together with the whole dossier dealing with the matter—is a classic in the brief and extremely sporadic annals of open diplomacy. Rarely can a situation have been summed up with such devastating courtesy and fairness. This is what he wrote:

"We have been profoundly moved by the conclusions of this agreement concluded without our being consulted or informed, and by the action of the two Governments in sending us a joint notification.

"In the first place, on our admission to the League of Nations we were told that all nations were to be on a footing of equality within the League, and that their independence was to be universally respected, since the purpose of the League is to establish and maintain peace among men in accordance with the will of God.

"We were not told that certain Members of the League might make a separate agreement to impose their views on another Member, even if the latter considered those views incompatible with its national interests.

"Secondly, one of the subjects covered by the agreement had already been discussed between the British Government and our own, and the fact that no conclusion had been reached was due to reasons of whose nature and importance we were fully aware; we had, however, never given any definite reply. We cannot help thinking, therefore, that in agreeing to support each other in these matters, and in giving us a joint agreement, the two Governments are endeavouring to exert pressure on us in order to induce us to comply with their demands prematurely, without having any time for reflection or consideration of our people's needs.

"The people of Abyssinia are anxious to do right, and we have every intention of guiding them along the path of improvement and progress; but throughout their history they have seldom met with foreigners who did not desire to possess themselves of Abyssinian territory and to destroy their independence. With God's help, and thanks to the courage of our soldiers, we have always, come what might, stood proud and free upon our native mountains.

"For this reason, prudence is needed when we have to convince our people that foreigners who wish to establish themselves for economic reasons in our country, or on the frontiers between it and their possessions, are genuinely innocent of political aims; and we doubt whether agreements and joint representations such as those now in question are the best means of instilling that conviction.

"Nor must it be forgotten that we have only recently been introduced to modern civilisation and that our history, glorious though it may be, has not prepared us for ready adjustment to conditions which are often quite beyond the range of our experience. Nature herself has never gone forward by sudden bounds, and no country has been metamorphosed in a night.

"With our well-known eagerness for progress—given time and the friendly advice of countries whose geographical position has enabled them to out-distance us in the race—we shall be able to secure gradual but continual improvements which will make Abyssinia great in the future as she has been throughout the past. But if we try to go too fast accidents may happen.

"We should like to hear from the Members of the League whether they think it right that means of pressure should be exerted which they themselves would doubtless never accept.

"We have the honour to bring to the notice of all the States Members of the League of Nations the correspondence which we have received, in order that they may decide whether that correspondence is compatible with the independence of our country, inasmuch as it included the stipulations that part of our Empire is to be allotted to the economic influence of a given power. We cannot but realise that economic influence and political influence are very closely bound up together; and it is our duty to protest most strongly against an agreement which, in our view, conflicts with the essential principles of the League of Nations."

The replies of the various nations concerned are also classics—of their kind. As to whether it is a very admirable kind the impartial student shall be left to judge.

#### I. GREAT BRITAIN

"There is nothing in the Anglo-Italian notes to suggest coercion or the exercise of pressure on the Abyssinian Government. Sir Austen Chamberlain has stated in

Parliament that the agreement was certainly not to be used and could not be used for the purpose of coercing the Abyssinian Government. He believed the agreement to be in the interest of all three parties, but added that, of course, the Abyssinian Government has a perfect right to judge of what was in the interest of Abyssinia."

[It cannot be said that the British Government has acted hurriedly, went on the letter, and dealt again with the attempts to obtain the concession since 1902.]

"Sir Austen Chamberlain desires to emphasise that the Anglo-Italian notes do not reserve any part of Abyssinia to Italian economic influence. His Britannic Majesty's Government, so far as they are concerned, and under certain conditions, 'recognise an exclusive economic influence in the west of Abyssinia.' This recognition cannot affect the rights of third parties or bind the Government of Abyssinia. It imposes no obligation on anyone except the British Government, who, in return for Italian undertakings in regard to Lake Tsana, engage not to compete or support competition with Italian enterprise in the region specified."

## 2. ITALY

Italy's explanation of the points raised by the Regent was even more explicit than the statement of Sir Austen Chamberlain.

"As regards the recognition by the British Government of an exclusive sphere of Italian economic influence in certain parts of Abyssinia, it is clear that this constitutes an agreement which is binding solely on the Italian and British Governments; it cannot detract from the right of the Abyssinian Government to take such decisions as it may think fit, or limit the possible action of third parties.

"It is a guarantee of an economic nature obtained for Italian enterprises against British enterprises in order to avoid competition which might imperil the success of these enterprises and hinder the development of local



resources which it may well be in the interests of Abyssinia to assist and promote."

The language of international diplomacy has rarely been so positive as this, and it is strange to reflect that the great Power which was solemnly affirming the independence of Ethiopia was at the same time planning how the country might best be seized.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE TRUTH ABOUT SLAVERY

*Extract from Report on Slavery, League of Nations Committee of Experts, 1932.*

"It would be unfair to the Abyssinian Government to take exception to the fact that it has not yet abolished slavery. In dealing with Abyssinia it must never be forgotten that the country was for two centuries cut off from the outside world, that its evolution has been retarded and that all matters concerning it cannot be judged by the principles governing European nations. . . . The abolition of slaves in Abyssinia is opposed by a barrier of ancient traditions. Very many officers of the Empire, including powerful chiefs, are against the abolition of slavery either because they espouse the feelings of the people under their jurisdiction or because they themselves derive benefit from the present situation. There is surely no need to point to the dangers to which the maintenance of the government's authority would be exposed or at all events the political disturbances with which it might be faced if, contrary to the general feeling and despite the interests which it might harm, it proceeds to abolish the status of slavery too rapidly."

### SLAVERY

Within living memory slavery on an immense scale was practised and strenuously upheld in the Southern States of the U.S.A. The Northern States, which envied the wealth, culture and independent spirit of the South, engaged in a war of conquest, concealing to a great extent

their true motives by the cry that it was their purpose to free the slaves. That conditions of life among certain of the "free" populations of the North, where proper factory laws and legislation for workmen's compensation were almost unknown, approximated to slavery in fact though not in name, was always conveniently forgotten. Nor can it be said that the victory of the North and the freeing of the slave populations resulted in an era of social well-being. In many States to-day any coloured citizen approaching the ballot box for the purpose of recording a vote would be "beaten up" by indignant whites. It is freely admitted that the problems resulting from the emancipation of the slaves are scarcely nearer solution as the result of some seventy years of "freedom."

That slavery in one or other of its many forms still exists in many parts of the British Empire is an undoubted fact. It is scarcely fifty years ago that the whole of Europe was shocked into horrified anger by revelations that in "darkest Africa" white men were profiting on a grand scale from the terrible traffic.

The writings of Henry Nevinson, greatest of war correspondents, brought home to the Quaker firm of Cadbury that the cocoa on which their fortunes rested was the product of slave labour often under appalling conditions. In justice to Cadbury's it must be placed on record that they were entirely unaware of what was happening in certain primitive areas from which they drew supplies. As soon as they were in possession of indisputable evidence they took every possible step to sever all connection with the abominations which Nevinson related. But it is significant that while praising their conduct in this matter, Nevinson shows flashes of impatience at the slowness with which they moved.

Yet Cadbury's cannot reasonably be blamed for this slowness. The fact is, as has been shown time and time again in history, that retreat from an economic position which has been shown to have unsound foundations from a humanitarian point of view, cannot be swift.

Any attempt to rush reform is bound to cause disorganisation and loss out of all proportion; and may, if a whole country is involved, lead to the complete breakdown of the state.

Ethiopia, though by no means "the last stronghold of slavery," as unscrupulous Italian propaganda now circulating in Great Britain proclaims, is admittedly a slave state. The Emperor Haile Selassie has never denied this. There is slavery to-day in Abyssinia—and has been for at least five thousand years.

Concerning this the Emperor speaks frankly, attempting no concealment. But he has protested many times both in public and also in private conversation against the unreasonableness of those Europeans who, with the example of the Southern States of America before their eyes, nevertheless expect him to eradicate the customs of centuries in a few brief years, and fail to see that if spectacular measures such as they demand were to be taken it is impossible that the country could survive.

Many of those who clamour are sensitive souls to whom the thought of slavery and the possible cruelties which it entails are terribly disturbing. They are perfectly sincere in their outcry, and since their actual knowledge of the countries which they assail is usually rudimentary, are utterly unaware of the complexity of the economic situation. Here, they say, is a slave. Let us free him. It is as simple as opening a cage and letting a bird fly away. It is true, of course, that the bird usually falls a victim to the first cat which it encounters; but the liberator does not see this act of the drama, and is only aware of a fine moral fervour within.

These misguided humanitarians have one noticeable quality. They nearly always select for their disapproval abuses which are at a great distance from their own hearths and homes. Sometimes, it is true, they are sensitive to all human bondage, and are humanitarian in the widest sense of the word. But usually they are self-

indulgent (a quality which often accompanies sensitiveness), and are careful to support reforms which will in no way interfere with their own privileged positions. They thus quiet their consciences with the thought that they are fighting wrongs, while suffering no personal inconvenience as a result of their valiant struggles.

Now these are hard words. But they have long needed saying. Many will interpret them as callousness on the part of the writer, and will say that they show a willingness to tolerate evil. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are inspired by a sense of proportion; also by a lively awareness of the irony of a society woman (let us say) weeping over the lot of African slaves while seated before a fire, the coal for which was hewn by Englishmen, working underground in appalling difficulty and danger for a wage of little over two pounds a week.

It will be argued that the cases are not parallel, that the miner is not a slave. Certainly he is not in the literal sense of the word; but a cultured Abyssinian visiting Britain might well draw back in horror from some aspects of our industrial scene.

It is all a question of custom. What the mind is used to always seems to be part of the nature of things and therefore more or less right. The Ethiopian, used to the employment of slaves and living in a country where slave labour has been continuously employed for generation upon generation, finds it difficult to understand the clamour against slavery which is raised by European nations, all of whom have their own Augean stables waiting to be cleansed as soon as the owners can be brought to turn their eyes upon their own shortcomings.

If the agitation of ill-informed humanitarians (of the type satirised once and for all by Charles Dickens in his portrayal of Mrs. Jellyby) went no further than their persistent appeals for what is vaguely termed "intervention," it would be easy to forgive; for admittedly there is a lot of genuine good feeling at the bottom of it, and it has made at times for the betterment of the world.

But, from the point of view of an independent Ethiopia, this anti-slavery agitation has its sinister side.

Ever since the beginning of history the well-meaning enthusiast for good causes has, it may be supposed, been made the tool of the shrewd and self-seeking man of ill-intent. Thus the Anti-Saloon League in the States, a thoroughly sincere body, who aimed at human betterment by the stamping out of the misery caused by alcohol, were soon made the tool of the huge boot-legging interests, to whom the continuance of Prohibition meant profit, and who were thus willing to subscribe handsomely to the Anti-Liquor Funds. The same sort of situation is in danger of arising through the existence of well-meaning anti-slavery movements in Europe—has indeed, in the opinion of many educated Ethiopians, arisen already.

The central government of Ethiopia was, as we have seen, admitted to be functioning with considerable efficiency, by the League of Nations Committee who enquired into this question in 1923. Ras Tafari, as the present Emperor was then named (at that time Regent), was slowly extending his control. The further this control was extended the less justification there would be for European intervention. It was therefore the policy of certain hidden interests, who desired that Ethiopian independence should be ended, to do everything in their power to weaken the Regent's hold. Twenty or thirty years previously their policy had been the exact contrary. The aim was then to strengthen Menelek and thus allow him to "clean up" his land and make it fit for occupation, using native lives in the process. The policy had failed. Menelek had indeed "cleaned up" his Empire, but had become sufficiently strong in consequence to resist European invasion. When Ras Tafari in turn showed himself strong enough to resist threats and shrewd enough to evade commercial traps, a campaign was started to discredit him, and the Anti-Slavery Movement was pressed into service.

In 1922 a series of remarkable attacks upon the Regent appeared in the London *Westminster Gazette* from the pen of Major Henry Darley. He was an experienced and truthful observer, and it is not the purpose of this chapter to impugn his sincerity, though his interpretation of his facts may be questioned. What was lacking in his writings was, first, evidence of the least ability on his part to picture Ethiopians as anything but thieves and murderers; and second, any appreciation of the fact that all was not entirely well with the adjacent native populations under British control, those, for example, in Kenya, where the white man was far from creating "nigger heaven." C. W. Hobley, the Senior Provincial Commissioner of Kenya, in an introduction to Major Darley's book published in 1926, gives a portrait of the author which is worth quoting since it may be held to give a reliable indication of the Major's standards:

" . . . the gallant Yorkshireman who is the hero of this thrilling story . . . is a man of the blonde Nordic Viking type to whom adventure is the salt of life. Such men are often impatient of authority and love to roam in unknown lands; but, alas, the sphere available for their activities is now becoming restricted. Britain, however, owes much to men of this breed, even though at times they fall foul of colonial governments through disregard of regulations and possibly the inability to assess fully the difficulties of the situation when international questions are involved. . . ."

It is impossible not to like the author as he appears in the pages of the book, but his judgments must be accepted with caution.

The book is dedicated to:

"All those who have suffered and who suffer at the hands of a race with strength but without mercy."

Now this is a fantastic picture of the Ethiopians who have been pictured by many writers as a decent and

kindly race. Further, Mr. Hobley's introduction is marred by a quite gratuitous insult to the Emperor:

"Since the book was written Ras Tafari has, of course, become the Emperor Haile Selassie and his successful ascent in the true oriental manner into the long line of Abyssinian rulers has done much to consolidate his power; the attendance of so many personages at his coronation also helped his prestige and probably tended to increase, to an unwarranted extent, his sense of self-importance."

Rarely can words have been used with less truth and good taste concerning the ruler of a friendly power. To accuse the retiring scholar-king of arrogance is unjust to a degree. When he has insisted on the respect due to his rank it has been on behalf of his country and not from personal pride. Haile Selassie is, as all who have seen him must testify, the mildest mannered of monarchs.

The quotation is given here as an index by which the contents of the book may be judged. It is all written from the standpoint of a superior race, which considers the abasement of a "native" ruler in the presence of its least representative to be a matter of course, and which cannot forgive an Ethiopian King for begging to differ.

This book is typical of the anti-slavery agitation. It is sincere in its way, but it assumes that nothing good can ever come out of Ethiopia and that the sooner some power, preferably Britain, takes over the whole country, the better for all concerned. Italian propagandist literature quotes largely from the volume, and some of the photographs, terrible indeed to European eyes, which accompanied the Italian dossier of condemnation against Ethiopia appear in it. The conclusions which the Italians draw is that *they* ought to step in; while, as might be expected French travellers are not lacking who have noticed slavery with horror and assume that the responsibility for ending it lies with France.

Three great powers all anxious to end slavery. . . . The Ethiopian, incorrigible cynic, points to other parts of the African continent, and judges from these that the object



of Europeans in "freeing" the slaves is not to make them into free peasant farmers but to force them to work for low wages and with high mortality in mines, plantations and other enterprises which require abundant, cheap labour.

It is to this end that the anti-slavery propaganda is aimed. The ardent and inexperienced propagandists do not know it, but they are being made the tools of unscrupulous corporations who would never think of employing slaves, whom they would have to feed and clothe even if they had no work for them, but who cast covetous eyes on possible sources of "free" labourers whom, when they have finished with them, they can discharge without further liability.

It is thus no exaggeration to say that anti-slavery propaganda has its sinister side—especially since there are plenty of European agents who drift in and out of Addis Ababa and whose sources of income are not explained, whose one purpose in life appears to be the button-holing of credulous travellers and the telling of appalling stories concerning the cruelties to which Ethiopians expose their slaves. There is, in fact, a subsidised campaign of exaggeration, the purpose of which is two-fold: either to cause immediate "intervention" by some great power and the taking over of the country; or to cause the Powers to press anti-slavery measures upon the Emperor to such an extent that his chiefs will revolt against him. In the confusion which follows the Powers will have to "step in" for the safety of European property, and once in will presumably stay. Thus, the intriguers hope, they have the Emperor Haile Selassie in a cleft stick. If he does not hurry with the freeing of the slaves he will be ousted by the Great Powers; and if he does free them he will be ousted by his own people. And in the second event the final result will be the same as in the first. The intriguers are confident that they will possess Ethiopia in the end.

Slavery in Ethiopia has three aspects.

First, there is domestic slavery. The chief complaint against this is that the slaves are treated with cruelty, but otherwise it is possible to make out a case for the defence. Then there is slave raiding. This is obviously criminal. It is a ghastly business and no decent-minded individual could defend it for one moment. Finally there is the slave trade.

This last matter can best be dealt with first.

Now the slave trade has two branches—internal and external. For many years it was the external trade which brought the biggest profits. The slaves were raided in the territories adjacent to Ethiopia and then smuggled through the deserts to the shore by secret routes. Arrived at the coasts the human cargo was loaded on to dhows and conveyed to the slave market of Arabia, and to other destinations along the Persian Gulf. British sloops and other craft were told off for the purpose of checking this business, but though they struggled hard their efforts did little to check the traffic. The area to be patrolled was so great and the traders were so cunning that for one dhow captured a dozen got through. Often when overhauled the dhows tied their slaves together and threw them overboard. The writer was told by a young English naval officer that on one occasion when his sloop was closing in on a dhow which was near to the Arabian shore and safety the slavers gave guns to the slaves who cheerfully fired on their rescuers with the rest.

With regard to slave running one point must be clear to the most violent accusers of Ethiopia. Since she has no access to the sea the trade cannot possibly be carried on without the assistance of either British, French or Italian subjects in one or other of the three Somalilands.

There is considerable secrecy concerning the investigations of the various governments of what goes on in their own territories but it is significant that in 1926, Sir Austen Chamberlain having been urged by Lord Cecil to take action, did all in his power to get an efficient

control of the Red Sea waters instituted through co-operation at Geneva.

Just what arguments were used in private among the various interests involved will probably never be known, but it was certainly the opposition of Italy to the granting of sweeping powers of search in territorial waters that rendered the consultations useless. To this extent, at least, Italy has incurred grave suspicion of being far less whole-hearted in her attitude to slavery than subsequent propaganda has suggested.

It is often claimed that the British and Italian authorities have co-operated to such an extent that the traffic is almost stamped out. This is a grave misinterpretation of the facts. What has happened is that owing to world depression, which has afflicted the Near East along with the rest of the world, the Red Sea market for slaves has collapsed.

This has been a grave blow to the British subjects, chiefly Indians from Bombay, who were engaged in meeting its demands, and most of them have turned their attention to drugs.

So much for the external trade. That within the borders of the country depended on a chain of slave markets of which the principal centre was Jimma, 150 miles west of Addis Ababa, where the independent "sultan" had a court which was said to rival the splendour of the Emperor's at the capital.

The story is often told of slaves being bred, as sheep and cattle are bred for the production of certain qualities. This always seems at first sight particularly shocking to the sensitive European mind, but in an age which freely debates the question of eugenics it is surely illogical for us to shrink from the practical application of scientific theory. In America the breeding of beautiful slaves was definitely practised, the aim of the breeder being to infuse white blood into the strain in just sufficient quantity to soften the coarseness of negroid features while preserving the grace and strength of the African types.

In the old days at New Orleans "coffees" were in great demand, and when, as sometimes happened, a girl was produced in whom racial blending resulted in astonishing beauty a thousand dollars and more was not thought too high a price.

At Jimma there was in the old days a far more deliberate process of breeding than ever was to be found in the Southern States. The results of careful observation of cross-breeding—some of them handed down from Egyptian times—were a carefully preserved mystery in the hands of certain wise men who took careful measurements and examined above all the colour of the eyes before advising as to the mating of slaves. Diet was carefully adjusted prior to the time of mating and also during the period of pregnancy while aphrodisiacs were frequently administered. There was much that was superstitious in the precautions which were observed, but that a basis of scientific reasoning determined the process is certain.

Far from feeling shame and revulsion the chosen slaves were proud of the distinction conferred upon them. They were well treated, suffered from none of the shrinking which a modern European might feel towards so calculated an approach to physical union, and never considered that they were enduring cruelty. Of late years the slave farm has become a rarity and it is to be doubted whether any now remain. Doubtless some owners still sometimes determine the matings of their slaves, but this is not usual and the law would not sanction any such compulsion.

But if what has been written is considered by some readers to be a callous attempt to justify abominable practices, they will be labouring under a serious misapprehension. It was necessary, however, to set down the facts concerning what has been a very much told tale, and the facts were: first, that the breeding of slaves was a natural consequence of certain social conditions not confined to Ethiopia; secondly, that it was not considered

a cruel practice even by the slaves themselves; thirdly, that if not entirely a thing of the past it soon will be.

The Jimma markets conducted business exactly as it was done in America before the Civil War. There was a code of laws to be observed, and there were also market customs. These markets were supplied by slave raids.

Most English people have learned through the life of Livingstone of what a slave raid conducted by Europeans was like and those conducted in the past by the semi-barbaric chiefs were of much the same character. But a distinction must be drawn between natives already slaves being carried off as booty when one Ras made war upon another, and the enslavement of free peoples over or along the frontiers as the result of sudden raids. There is confusion in the minds of many people concerning these two very distinct cases. Much as we in Europe may deplore tribal wars, we must admit that we certainly stage them on a far bigger scale than anything ever seen in Ethiopia, and if it is urged that our conflicts are less ferocious and less ghastly there are still plenty of men in military hospitals to give a contrary opinion. Tribal wars, in which slaves passed from the conquered to the conquerors, though they doubtless involved great hardship for the slaves at times, were hardly cause enough for Britain or any other great power to interfere. When, however, the raids were across the frontier and the subject races of either Britain or some other power were seized there was clearly a case for intervention. That such raids were once of quite frequent occurrence is possible, but they have been getting encouragingly less frequent of late years. In the two reports submitted to the British Parliament in 1925 and in 1928 no fewer than 139 raids from Ethiopian into British territory are quoted as having taken place between 1913 and 1927, but it has been officially stated by Sir Richard Coryndon that the primary object of these raids was the capture of ivory or of cattle rather than the taking of slaves, of

which "happily very few instances occur"; and as a proof that there is amazing improvement of conditions recently it is recorded that there have been no raids into Kenya since 1932.

Domestic slavery as a condition of life is clearly not ideal, but the actual degree of unhappiness which the slave experiences must depend to a great extent on the master. That cases of revolting cruelty are to be found in Ethiopia is true; the same was true of the Southern States of America. But to suggest that they are common is as ridiculous as to suggest that this type of slavery is confined to Abyssinia. In one breath it is urged by the anti-slavery propagandist that the slave is valuable property; in the next it is suggested that this valuable property is habitually ill-treated. Now it is plain that habitual ill-usage must rapidly destroy the value of a slave and that ordinary common sense rejects the suggestion that such conduct is other than the exception. All over Ethiopia there are slaves living reasonably happily. They would be happier free, no doubt, if together with their freedom they could be given a proper economic status; but unless that is certain they are definitely for the most part better off as they are. As for the suggestion that it is only in Abyssinia that slaves are to be found, this is what M. de Jouvenel, the French delegate, said to the League of Nations when the question of Ethiopia's admission was under discussion:

"As to the question of domestic serfdom, it must be confessed that many governments have found themselves faced with similar difficulties. Such was the case with the French colonies, the Belgian Congo . . . and others. . . ."

. . . and, as an interesting footnote it may be added that the Report to the League on Slavery for 1935, while paying a tribute to the manner in which the central government of Ethiopia was tackling the problem, pointed out that *conditions hardly distinguishable from slavery were to be found in the Italian colony of Eritrea.*

It is frequently stated that the slave in Ethiopia has no civil rights. This is not correct. There now exist special courts, sixty-two in number, to which a slave who has been ill-treated has the right to complain. Some salutary warnings have been inflicted upon owners by these courts of late. If the charge is proved to the satisfaction of the court the slave has the right to demand freedom—if he so wishes.

A female slave who bears a child by her master is freed if she so wishes from the time of birth; a male slave who finds favour in his mistress' eyes (the phrasing has a queer biblical flavour) has also the right to be freed. All these laws are part of the Emperor Haile Selassie's plan for the gradual freeing of slaves without risk to the economic framework of his country.

If a slave is sold, or sent as a gift to anyone he is free. A man may leave his slaves to his sons, but if he dies without a properly signed will his slaves are free.

A slave's child is free from the moment of birth, but the master must feed and clothe the child till the age of fifteen, demanding only light service in return. At fifteen years of age the slave is free to go where he pleases.

Further laws enact:

Any person who buys a slave, who sells, supplies, or in any manner takes part in the trading of slaves, shall pay a fine of five hundred dollars and be imprisoned for ten years; and for a second offence shall be imprisoned for life.

The governor of that province wherein the offence of slave trading shall have been proved to have occurred shall be fined three hundred dollars on the first conviction, and five hundred dollars on the second. For permitting a third offence he shall forfeit his governorship and all rights that go with

it. And if it be proved that he connived at the offence he shall be treated as an accomplice and suffer the full severity of the law.

The chief of any tribe in which an offence occurs shall be fined a sum to be named by the court and shall have the right to collect a proportion of that sum from prosperous members of his tribe.

By means of such edicts as these the Emperor, who has worked strenuously for the freedom of the slaves hopes that in course of time—he promised Lord Noel Buxton of the Slavery Convention that it should be not longer than twenty years—slavery will be practically unknown in his country. And the change-over, which was only possible in America after a civil war of most sanguinary character, will have been effected in Ethiopia in gradual and harmless stages.

So far there has been one main difficulty. The slaves refuse freedom. They do not know what to do with it when it is accorded to them. Therefore it is on the children that the Emperor bases his hopes. He has commenced a scheme for the setting up of schools at which the boys born from slave parents but due to be freed at fifteen may learn trades. Thus when they are permitted to leave the house where their parents served they will be able to set themselves up as craftsmen or take jobs at a good wage. These schools take the boy at the age of seven and as their scope is increased it is hoped that a large number of crafts, some of them quite advanced, such as metal-work and simple architecture, will be taught in them, or thorough commercial training given. This is all part of the future to which the life of the Emperor is dedicated. At present only the beginnings exist, and the present war, far from civilising Ethiopia, has put a stop to all progressive schemes. But the impartial observer must admit that the plan was not only idealist in conception but intensely practical in its details; while one of the most satisfactory provisions of



the scheme is that which lays down that the scholars from the schools shall be taken into the employment of the government according to their capacities, and without any discrimination against them on account of their origin.

This is the first glimmerings of a civil service on the English plan and it owes its conception to a great extent to the keen mind and kindly nature of Hakim Warqneh—better known to the British public as Dr. Martin. This fine scholar and capable administrator, who was educated in England and took medical degrees, has worked under the British Government, and has frequently said that he regards the British Civil Service as the bulwark of civilisation, and that it is his ambition to lay the foundations of a similar service in Ethiopia before his work is done.

Reference is made elsewhere to the remarkable life story of this redoubtable man, but here, since it bears on the slavery question, there must be told an anecdote which introduces a strong element of comedy into the discussion of domestic serfdom.

Dr. Martin's wife (a princess of the Royal House) decided, as a gesture to the future, not to wait for the gradual emancipation of her slaves but to free them immediately. The princess, who has since died, was a very gifted woman, but she found it extremely difficult to explain to her hundred female slaves what it meant to be free.

When they understood they were delighted, but when it was further pointed out to them that they could leave the house they flatly refused to consider the idea. They felt themselves to be members of the family. Freedom, that is, not having to obey orders, suited them well enough; but as for leaving the home they knew so well, they were shocked at the thought of such a thing. In any case, they demanded, where were they to go?

The question proved unanswerable for a long while, and in the meantime they stayed on and worked very much as before—though with a very independent manner.

One last fact with which to end this chapter. Those readers whose ideas of slavery are coloured by the bloodhounds who pursued the heroine of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* across the ice will be amazed to learn the present state of the law in Ethiopia. If a slave runs away from his master he cannot be arrested anywhere except at the frontier posts of the country. There, if he has no papers, he will be detained. But if within eight days his master fails to claim him the slave must be set free. As Doctor Martin remarked—in view of the fact that the state of the roads in most parts of the country is such that eight days does not take you very far, if the slave has sense enough to choose the right frontier he has a very good chance indeed of his master feeling that the journey to fetch him back is not worth while.

With this last word the subject of slavery may well be left to the experts. If this brief outline of its less familiar aspects is held to be a defence of slavery as a principle of human life, it will have been sadly misinterpreted. Slavery is not only a denial of all that is best in the human spirit, it has been shown many times in history to be ultimately inefficient and unstable. Inefficient because slaves are never so productive as freemen; unstable because slaves rarely feel loyalty to their owners, whose military strength is lessened in times of danger to the state by the need for keeping a watch on the slaves. That slavery has existed in Ethiopia for so long is an indication that conditions cannot, on the whole, have been bad. Always it has had the sanction of the Church, which while condemning cruelty, has maintained that there is Scriptural warrant for slavery in the recorded customs of Moses. In his fight against it the Emperor is tackling a problem beside which the social difficulties of Roosevelt or Mr. Baldwin dwindle to negligible proportions. They are striving to cure Unemployment—but the Depression is not yet a tradition reaching back for five thousand years.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CONCESSIONS

It was the French who gave to the world the term *concessionnaire*—just one of the many indications of the hold which the Gallic race maintains over the language of diplomacy. It first meant the right to supply a government department which was granted as a monopoly to some business man, ostensibly because he would quote lower prices were he assured of the market for a number of years, but often because he had handsomely bribed the official in whose discretion the matter lay. There was in those days no thought that a government had any other monopolies which it could concede, but with the development of industry and the insatiable demand for raw materials, came the opening up of distant regions, in which the concession hunter played a distinguished part.

He was no longer the suave courtier entering into relations with the chamberlains of Emperors and the mistresses of kings to put through his "little bit of business." He was instead a ragged wanderer who thrust his way into unknown parts, either hammering fragments of rock with his geologist's hammer or scanning with eager eyes the last grains of mineral remaining after the washing and sifting of silt from a river bed.

Often he spent the whole of his life roaming hungry and tattered with the constant feeling that fortune lay just over the next ridge of barren hills or down the next creek of some poisonous stream. But sometimes he made a discovery. His next thought was to rush back to civilisation and stake his claim.

If the discovery were made in savage country where there was no government able to sign charters and apply

seals to paper, then the concession hunter applied to the great power which had the land under its protection or regarded it as a sphere of influence. In the comparatively rare event of there being no great power with its eye on that particular piece of country at the time when the discovery was made, there were usually several quarrelling over it soon after the news leaked out.

Little by little many of these concession hunters became the recognised agents of their governments, or else of some big industrial or trading concern which usually had government backing in some form or other if its status were thoroughly investigated. These were the days when kings were shareholders, and when prime ministers did not scruple to take their share of the loot. Of course all this was as old as Columbus, in fact much older; but the demands of the huge machines constructed by nineteenth century science started it off once again in a newer and more thorough style.

A bird's eye view of the whole of Africa during the century of expansion and imperial thrust would have revealed a vast map of forest, desert and jungle cut by the great rivers and with here and there on its surface small bodies of men lost in the vastness but plodding on towards some phantom goal. Mostly they died of thirst or fever or poisoned arrows; but there was a darker side to it all, for sometimes, if they were about to make too determined use of their country's flag they died by secret order of some rival power.

Every schoolboy is familiar with a few great names and stories, the essence of which is held in those inspired words: "Mr. Livingstone, I presume," but once the student of history begins to delve into the literature of exploration it is the mass of unknown names which amazes him and the number of unexplained mysteries in which so many of the lesser known stories end.

There soon comes a feeling that besides the comparatively unknown names there are others never known at all, the names of men who undertook secret expeditions

for their countries and whose failure to return was explained away without reference to the work they were engaged upon.

No Oppenheim has ever done justice to exploration, which was much more closely akin to espionage than most people realise. Perhaps the reason is that the sinister side of it all is just a shade too unpleasant for our taste. That men should fight each other is admitted to be natural, and that men should fight with Nature is natural too, but there is a queer feeling somewhere in the human mind that when Nature is winning in the fight all men are allies. The story of an expedition lost because its vital stores were diverted by the agent of some rival power is inexpressibly shocking to the civilised mind; but such incidents are known to have occurred.

It is well to point this out because great powers have a way of talking about their civilising mission to barbaric lands. It is a useful corrective to that sort of talk to reflect what deliberate cold-blooded barbarities have been committed by civilised men in the interests of their countries.

Since Abyssinia was the last African territory to remain untouched by European penetration most of the explorers who came in the nineteenth century to penetrate her mysteries were possessed of more or less official backing. A good many of them perished, and those who did not made very little impression on the country. After Adowa, however, came a period when the governments had called off their agents, and most of the concession-hunters were free lances. Since it is their accounts which have contributed in no small measure to the "bad name" which Ethiopia is said to possess among explorers and their like, it is worth while to look at the matter from the Ethiopian point of view.

The penniless adventurer arrived and requested an audience with the Negus. The more disreputable he was the more truculent was his demand for a hearing. He nearly always hinted that big interests were behind him, that there were men in Paris or London or Rome

to whom he had only to say the word for their money bags to be unloosed. All that he wanted was an option for a year or so on about two-thirds of the country. He wouldn't pay for it, because he was doing the favour, not the Ethiopian Government.

After a good many negotiations he would at last be persuaded to see reason. His demand for a sort of roving option would be translated into more understandable and practical terms. An area of, say, a thousand square miles would be allocated to him. Then came the question of payment. He had no money, but said that he could easily raise some. Very well, he was to have three months to raise a certain number of dollars, which if paid would extend his option for a year.

Now had the concession-seeker been dealing with a European capitalist he would have been forced to admit that terms such as these were reasonable in the extreme; but because the other party to the bargain was the ruler of an African country, he became, as soon as he insisted on reasonable safeguards before parting with valuable rights over his territories, a scheming and crafty oriental who drove hard bargains, who requested large fees with which to line his coffers, who was in short, a swindler.

Journalists hanging round the less reputable drinking haunts of Addis Ababa would hear this story over and over again. . . . Poor Old Johnny or Poor Old François who came out to Abyssinia, gave the best years of his life to exploring the country, paid down his last dollar for a grudging concession, and then because the time-limit had expired before the chaps in Europe would stump up, was bilked of what by right of toil and discovery was assuredly his.

Sometimes the story was more circumstantial. The concession had been granted, everything was ready to start; but the wily government officials were determined that the conditions of the lease should be broken, so stirred up native troubles in the district which hindered the work. Then, when the date was passed by which

certain agreed work had to be finished if the contract were to stand, the government officials stepped in and scooped the pool.

These tales, which lost nothing in the telling, were many of them sheer falsehood; while those in which there was a substratum of fact would have made very different telling from the point of view of the Emperor or his advisers. Poor Old Johnny or Jimmy or François was not always the fine upstanding empire builder of the subsequent narrative. Often he was a crook who had been warned off most other parts of Africa and had drifted into Abyssinia as a last chance. He had probably managed to get some sort of recognition from his legation, for his history was probably not known and it is difficult for one white man to refuse another of the same race when reminiscences of Piccadilly Circus or the Bois de Boulogne have once been exchanged far from home. Thus armed, Johnny or François would obtain an audience either with the Emperor or with one of the ministers, and would be granted leave to fit out an expedition in an agreed direction. He would be warned that certain areas were closed to him and that in others he must go at his own risk, but (since Johnny and François rarely were lacking in a sort of desperate courage) he would make light of the warnings. In due course his expedition, fitted out largely on credit, would start.

In a short while stories would begin to filter back to the capital of what the white man was doing. Sometimes they were not very pleasant stories. Wages were not being paid as stipulated; food had been stolen from villages; a mule or perhaps cattle were laid at the white man's charge. So, sometimes, were definite cruelties.

Sometimes the slave trade came into the picture, though it is only fair to say that, as regards concession hunters, conduct of this sort was rare. It was whites of mixed southern European stock who gave most trouble in that direction, though there were occasional cases of concession men who joined forces with these outcasts to

lend to their proceedings the prestige of an exploring expedition.

After as much had been borne as was possible, the permit would perhaps be cancelled. The white man, who had to make out a good case to his consul in order to get sympathy and his passage money home, would invent a harrowing story of intrigue against him, hinting that he was being persecuted because he had stumbled on government secrets so terrible that were they to be known the European nations would demand at once that such horrors should be ended.

Sometimes the expedition returned and the concession asked for was granted on condition that production of one sort or another should be started by a certain date. Often the concessionaire was bluffing, and when the time came to explain his default he would relate how all the delays which he had experienced were the result of secret instructions from the government to the tribes.

Where does the truth lie in all this tangle of charges and counter-charges? It is not the purpose of this chapter to say. But at least it seems probable that the Ethiopian point of view has something to be said for it. Even consuls, who are usually disposed to defend the doings of their nationals, have many times washed their hands of certain "prospectors"—which it is hardly likely they would have done had not the conduct of these pioneers of Empire placed them beyond the pale.

It is possible that having been many times bitten by men of this sort the Ethiopian government has adopted too suspicious and unhelpful an attitude towards the concessionaire. It may be that occasionally a local chief has set himself against the intrusion of white men into his district and has deliberately created difficulties.

But risks of this latter kind are part of the game. In the event of a concession being successfully exploited the profits are high. It is thus only natural that the risks shall be in proportion. Doubtless some prospectors have been unlucky.



To suggest that the central government, which has everything to gain from the stimulation of production in the country and which is usually a partner in the enterprise at least to the extent that there is to be an agreed taxation of output, is secretly hampering the work is hardly reasonable. It is the normal alibi of the man who has failed. Whether the failure is entirely his own fault, whether it is the result of circumstances over which he has no control, or whether the hostility of some local chieftain has contributed towards it, there can be almost certainly no more blame attached to the officials at Addis Ababa than arises from the fact, of which the prospector is always warned, that the writ of the Negus does not carry everywhere in his dominions the same authority. And if the Negus is to be blamed unduly for this, the retort is always open to him that, judging from the news of punitive expeditions which appears from time to time in London newspapers, there are parts of the British Empire where the white man's writ is on occasion disregarded.

And as a footnote to this chapter a word is advisable concerning one of the bravest and most able explorers who ever visited the savage regions of Abyssinia—Nesbit, whose book, *Forest and Desert*, is as fine a piece of adventure writing as can be found.

He tells with great gusto how on finding that his permit did not include a certain area which he was most keen to visit he ingeniously trapped one of his men into telling him the native name (complete with spelling) of this province which he forthwith inserted on the permit with his own hand.

It is a good story. The keenness of the explorer is understandable, and doubtless many Englishmen chuckled as they read. But look at it from the other point of view. What happens in England to people who alter government forms to suit their own convenience? I am not sure, but it is probable that whatever happens to them is quite unpleasant. Nothing happened to Mr. Nesbit. He was

even preparing to return to Ethiopia as a war correspondent when his tragic death in a flying disaster cut short a brilliant scientific and literary career.

No word of this commentary must be taken as implying the least reflection upon Mr. Nesbit, a courageous man, who felt that in the interests of science it was fair to use forgery for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. He acted honourably according to his lights, and certainly had no ulterior motive in his expedition. But picture yourself as a British official reading how by means of a faked passport an Ethiopian has obtained entry into some forbidden area. What is your reaction? Answer that question honestly and you will have gone a long way towards solving the problem of why Abyssinians have never offered foreigners such a welcome as these brave men have thought themselves entitled to; in which case this chapter, which is bound to be misunderstood in many quarters, will not have been penned altogether in vain.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GREAT CORONATION

THE Emperor has been three times crowned, first as Regent; then following the retirement of the Empress Zawditu from the active government of the State, when he took the rank of Negus or King; and finally after the death of Zawditu, when in the presence of delegates from every civilised kingdom he was anointed Negus Negusti or King of Kings by the head dignitary of the Coptic Church.

This ceremony which, following upon the admission of his country to the League of Nations, must be regarded as a supreme achievement, merits description. It is also instructive to see how the ambition to win such a coronation arose in the mind of the young Ras Tafari, whose first administrative post came to him at the age of seventeen and was the governorship of the southern province of Sidamo—a position he might well have held to the end of his days but for the urge implanted in him by his father. In this account the idealistic aspects of Ras Makonnen's character have been stressed because certain superficial observers who have made little allowance for the times and conditions in which he lived have overlooked them. But it cannot be denied that the great Ras was ambitious and trained his boy to feel the same.

During his travels in Europe, of which some mention has been made, Ras Makonnen, the father of Haile Selassie, was present at the coronation of King Edward VII. His picturesque figure as he walked in the procession

delighted the crowds, and he himself was delighted by the dignity and beauty of the ceremonies. He asked many questions concerning the inner significance of the elaborate ritual and was particularly interested in the part played by the Church in the structure of the State. Was the King in the power of the Archbishop of Canterbury, he questioned. Were the bishops also nobles? Did none of the peers ever conspire against the King? Had they no armed followers?

These matters were explained to Ras Makonnen, and as he began to appreciate the amazing harmony with which all the affairs of the State were conducted his admiration of British institutions grew and grew. He made careful notes of all the proceedings and reported in detail to the Emperor Menelek the magnificent spectacle which he had witnessed.

"It was in just such a manner that our great Kings of the past must have ridden to receive their crowns," he said. "We have much the same ritual in the traditions of our land. But in England they have achieved perfection. Each man knows his place and the duties demanded of him."

To his young son who questioned him eagerly as to his travels Ras Makonnen spoke many times of the great procession. "Everything was very solemn and splendid. There were not only all the nobles of the country present, but great men from other lands. They did not come as a sign of submission, but as guests who attend a wedding and bring gifts as tokens of good will."

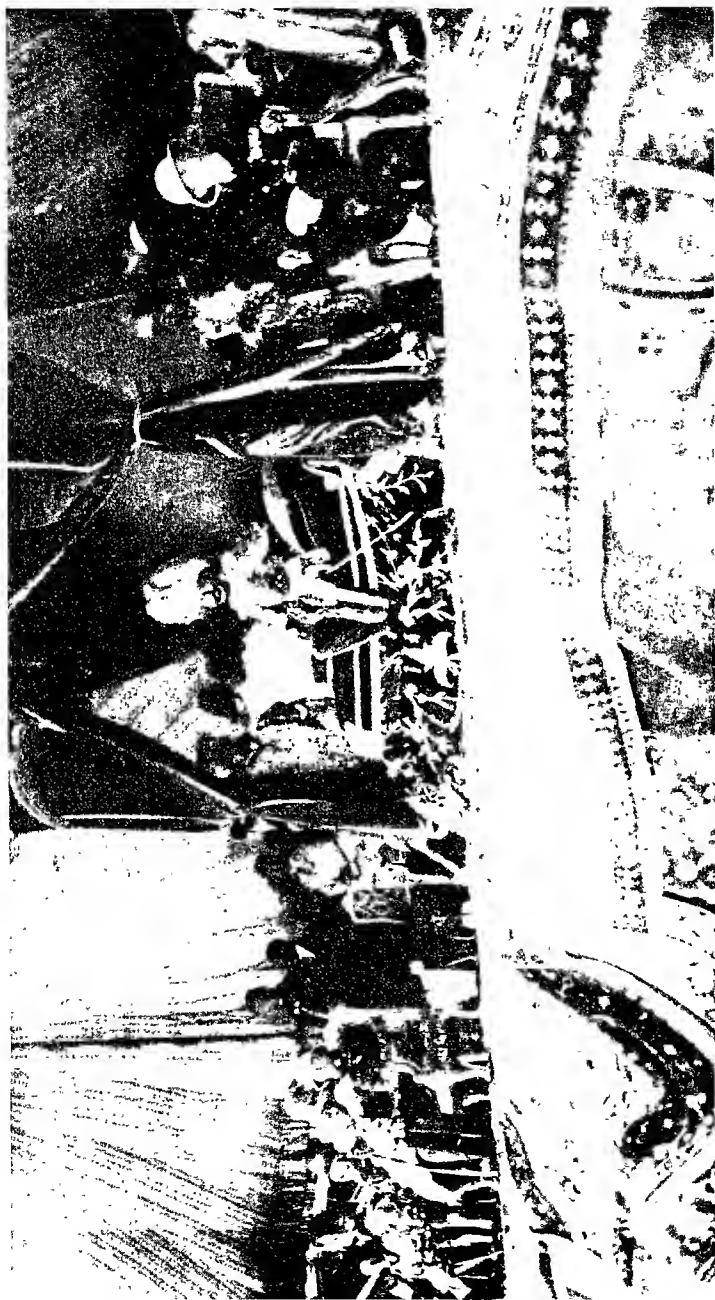
For it was the presence of foreign representatives which had especially impressed Ras Makonnen. He had resolved in his heart that were he called to the throne his coronation should be a great occasion, and that he would invite the monarchs of Europe to attend in person or by deputy. He could see the importance of being accepted as King not only by the nation but by the heads of other nations as well.

But Ras Makonnen was not destined to rule. When he saw that his end was near his thoughts centred upon the hope that his son might one day reign.

"Some men fear the throne as a place of danger, my son; and, indeed, for a man who is weak or a fool there can be no place of greater peril. But if a man is strong and wise the throne is the safest place for him. The people all look to the throne, and in this lies a king's power. Unless he is unjust and oppressive so that his people learn to hate him he can always, by reason of the majesty of his position, be far more powerful than any other man. But a king must show his power to his people. He must surround himself with splendour. His people will not grudge him his magnificence for they will feel that they share his glory."

These words were never forgotten by the son of Ras Makonnen. Throughout his reign he was ever a born ruler knowing always when to conciliate and when to crush, when to be humble and when magnificent; and in his coronation as Emperor in November, 1930, he achieved a pageant of such splendour that those who watched were spellbound.

In the spring of 1930 a serious rebellion brought home to the Emperor the need for the proper establishment of a central authority, single and powerful, to administer the new laws. Ras Gugsä, the divorced husband of Zawditu, was the prime mover in this outbreak which aimed at re-establishing the old order of things. That the Empress was a party to the plot is not certain, nor from one point of view does it seem likely since her relations with Ras Gugsä were by no means friendly. However, so great was her dislike of the Negus that she may well have felt that any ally was desirable in her struggle against him; and, further, it is quite possible that she had designs of her own which, while they depended on the help of Ras Gugsä, did not necessarily include his ascent to the throne. In this web of intrigue it is difficult to estimate motive; but balancing all the various



#### THE CORONATION SPECTACLE

The Duke of Gloucester sits in the place of honour at the Emperor's right hand. The rich carpets in the foreground are always spread for the Emperor on State occasions



EUROPEAN INSTRUCTORS WITH NATIVE TROOPS



"HIGH STREET," ADDIS ABABA

probabilities it seems likely that the Empress was less involved in the affair than most people imagined. Certainly at this time she was deeply immersed in religious duties, the Church having obtained very great ascendancy over her. This being so it would appear that the revolt had she inspired it would have had considerable support from the priesthood; and there is little evidence of this. A few local priests were mixed up in the rising, but the main body of the Church was solidly behind the Negus, who had been careful to conciliate religious opinion even when pressing forward reforms to which the Church was at heart opposed. Probably had Ras Gugsä proved successful the Church would gladly have turned to him as a ruler likely to maintain the old regime; but there was no open support of the revolt.

By this time the Negus was used to dealing with rebellion and his technique was perfected. It depended first on a well organised intelligence service and constantly improving communications; secondly, an exact knowledge of the character of the various allies so that jealousies among them could be exploited to the full; and finally upon judicious use of a well-filled purse. Time and again in history the various parties to a revolt have all wished to wait till some degree of success was achieved before committing themselves—and it was thus with the allies of Ras Gugsä. They postponed striking until he could show evidence of his strength; and while they hesitated the forces of the Negus swooped down upon their leader who was killed in battle.

The following day the Empress Zawditu died in mysterious circumstances. It was widely rumoured that the Negus, warned of her complicity in the revolt, had arranged for her unofficial execution; but a careful consideration of the facts and the evidence of the attendants shows clearly the falsity of this report. The symptoms were those of heart-failure rather than poisoning and apart from the tragic coincidence of her death following so swiftly upon that of Ras Gugsä there was not a shadow



of doubt in the minds of those best qualified to speak that it was due to natural causes. In Ethiopia such a coincidence as this was bound to lead to rumours, but so high was the reputation of the Negus that even among his enemies there were none who in their hearts suspected him of having had any hand in the death of the Empress Zawditu even though it cleared his path to the throne.

The path was indeed clear. Rival claimants all but one were dead—and he was safely imprisoned. Rebels were crushed; the Church, though at heart uneasy, felt bound to give support; the Empress was dead and her faction dispossessed of high office. Tafari Makonnen, already Negus, found himself able to claim the supreme title—Negus Negusti, “Negus of Neguses”—“King of Kings.”

The heads of the Church were consulted. They desired unity for national purpose and an effective defence against possible Islamic revolt. They also desired the confirmation of their immemorial privileges. The Negus bargained with them, promising to uphold the Church in every way if in their turn they would help in his plans for the betterment of the country, and support him in his claim to imperial power. The Abuna, well aware that a strong emperor crowned by the head of the Church and pledged to uphold the Coptic faith was in the best interests of Church and State alike, gave ready consent, and a great ceremony was planned in which all the jarring elements in the country were to be united. An attempt was to be made to revive the splendours of Prester John and to show not only to the peoples of Ethiopia but to the whole world that the forgotten land of Abyssinia was once more a power with whom to reckon.

During the rainy season of 1930 the plans were carefully laid. The stories which he had heard from his father had determined Tafari Makonnen to celebrate his coronation as Emperor on a grand scale with English ceremonial as his model. A request was accordingly made to the

British Foreign Office for a copy of the coronation ritual which was willingly supplied. It then was necessary to evolve an order of service which was a judicious blend of British custom with the rites of the Coptic Church. There were certain bishops who did not care for the least innovation, but since the direct instructions for the crowning of an Ethiopic monarch which were to be found in the ancient books were such as to allow some latitude, it was not easy to prescribe any exact traditional ceremony and when the priests learned that the Royal House of Great Britain can trace its ancestry to King David and that its coronation ritual is in essence of great antiquity their opposition was speedily removed.

Through the normal diplomatic channels invitations were sent to all the great powers enquiring would they wish to be represented at the ceremony and the replies were favourable in every instance. It was not only that policy suggested the advisability of not allowing rival countries to steal the limelight. Tafari Makonnen had made an excellent impression on European society during his tour some years before. Expecting a barbaric potentate, all Europe had been charmed by this quiet-mannered, cultured, and distinguished guest. In Sweden especially he had made a great impression—so much so that his subsequent welcoming of Swedes into his country was referred to by the jealous Italians as “the Swedish invasion” and later the “Swedish menace”; but it was not alone the Swedes who had been won by his scholarly demeanour, for every nation which he had visited was glad to do him honour.

Great Britain, in return for the gracious compliment which the Negus had paid in making her coronation ritual the basis of his own ceremony, sent a prince of the blood royal to lead the coronation procession. His Majesty King George V announced that the Duke of Gloucester should represent him at Addis Ababa, an act for which Tafari Makonnen was deeply grateful and which, together with the cordial and tactful conduct of the British Legation

staff, cemented the excellent relations which had for some time existed between the two countries in spite of the fact that England had opposed the admission of Abyssinia into the League of Nations.

Arrangements for the housing and entertainment of the great influx of visitors and for their safe transport from and to the coast proceeded apace and within a few days from the date of the ceremony—which had been fixed for November 3rd—the capital was crowded with Europeans. Meanwhile from all around long caravans of dusky figures were converging on the city. From the top of a great hill some miles to the south the country could be seen in panorama, a great space of plain and mountain, the distance dotted with the moving shapes of men and beasts. Each descending hill on the far off slopes showed by its clouds of dust that riders were on their way. The dust shone whitely in the clear sunlight and at night the flicker of camp fires showed where the approaching caravans were resting. Those who had come within near reach of the city when night overtook them pushed on by torchlight. It was an eerie scene.

In the city streets the wondering crowds had begun to collect already. They moved in chattering groups from one thing of wonder to another. The flags which flamed on buildings and triumphant arches seemed less brightly coloured than the throngs which swarmed below. Here and there a policeman walked, proudly conscious of his smart white uniform and alert to suppress mischief while a few soldiers of the Imperial bodyguard kept back the crowd from the entrances of the principal buildings, but though everywhere there was noise and life there was excellent discipline.

As for the city itself it had been thoroughly swept and garnished. One visitor described it as appearing from some angles as a typical Mediterranean town; a naval officer said that "it looked like a battleship on review day"; while one or two cynical newspapermen wrote of

"window dressing." Everyone was impressed by the blaze of colour in the clear mountain air.

"I think that the thin air of these plateau altitudes produces an exhilaration of the senses which sharpens the mind towards colour," wrote a young Frenchman who witnessed the scene, "for never have I felt so intensely the power of bright hues in the sunlight. Flags seemed to glitter like knives."

The Emperor-elect may well feel proud as he gazes at his capital. All round the palace are fine new roads and triumphal arches. The newly-made square in front of St. George's Cathedral, named after the great Menelek whose statue is soon to be unveiled, has sanded paths between regularly spaced beds of bright flowers and neat lawns of fresh green grass. It all looks rather new, to be sure, and lacks that air of age and permanence which gives to the London scene its peculiar dignity and charm, but it is a spacious and well-planned conception, symbolic of the new era into which he is leading his people. This has meant hard work, for there are few to whom he can safely delegate even the details of his schemes for the development of his city and his country. When he returned from Europe, his mind full of new ideas and his will steeled to carry out his plans, he had to face many discouragements. But so far he has succeeded, and will prevail further. Few of those who are his guests realise what he has accomplished, for they see the completed work, nothing remarkable by the standards to which they are accustomed, yet a miracle indeed in comparison to what was there before. They do not know with what difficulty the gangs of road makers were drilled into efficiency and how the Emperor himself surveyed the roads, issuing personal instructions. Seated in an open and rather battered car he would drive slowly along the streets his eyes scanning the roadway. Where repairs seemed called for the Emperor would cast a pebble as a sign to the labourers who would at once set to work

with daemonic energy to re-make the surface of the road. Frequently there were delays. Materials had been wrongly delivered, workmen were unskilful, tools had been damaged. Always it was the Emperor who sought out the causes of the trouble and gave instructions as to how the difficulties might be surmounted. His gift for rapid calculation more than once defeated those who tried to steal roadbuilding materials claiming afterwards that they had been used. The Emperor always knew the right quantities which had to be accounted for, and any man who attempted to deceive him soon discovered to his cost that it was not easy. And through the driving force of his will the roads were made.

Now comes the day when the Statue of Menelek II is to be unveiled in the presence of delegates from almost every European country. Never in the history of Ethiopia has there been a pageant such as this.

In olden times the Kings of Ethiopia rode upon mules caparisoned in gold and silver. The modern emperor rides in a huge motor car, shining with silver and red. As escort ride the newly-formed Imperial Lancers, the Ethiopian colours—red, yellow and green—fluttering proudly at the tips of a bright forest of lances. Side by side with this military panoply of European type is to be seen the changeless past. The traditions of old Ethiopia are shown in splendid style by the marching chieftains, proud of their gaily coloured cloaks and their lions' mane head-dresses, behind them their followers with spears and shields.

The Abuna rides in state, his head swathed in a long black veil and long black robes enveloping his figure, and beside him is the Crown Prince, young and handsome, simply but richly attired in a brown velvet cloak and a grey felt hat of striking curved brim. There is weird music as the procession moves forward for the Imperial band, boys from the school for freed slaves which is the Emperor's most cherished institution, strike up a barbaric melody, bitter and penetrating sounds with a strange haunting

rhythm. They are not playing native music in its purity; this air with which they play the Emperor to his throne is a compromise between the styles of east and west.

Round the Imperial throne which stands on a carpeted dais and is sheltered by an awning of light blue silk, the foreign envoys are placed in a semicircle, the Duke of Gloucester, who is wearing the full-dress uniform of the Hussars, in the place of honour at the Emperor's right. Behind the throne stand five Coptic bishops all in voluminous robes of black silk, each carrying an ornate gold cross of beautiful yet strangely complex design. They also hold small scarlet umbrellas fringed with drooping tassels of bright gold. Slightly to one side stands a magnificent figure, the King's High Minister of State, in a dress of gorgeous colour and amazingly intricate pattern, and the the Kantiba or Mayor of the city in black and gold. Then, as if to add one final touch of the ultra modern to this scene in which the old and the new are so strikingly blended, there are, right opposite the Emperor's throne, two strange looking objects draped in the national colours yet strangely foreign to the glorious past this day invokes.

They are microphones.

The ceremony was simple. The Emperor received from the hand of his Minister of State a paper from which he read in slow clear tones a formal speech praising the virtues of Menelek the Great and making a solemn pledge that the work which he began should be carried out. It also referred to the presence of guests from beyond the seas and expressed the hope that with the aid of the undoubted friendship of which their presence was proof Ethiopia would share in the benefits of civilisation and worthily fulfil her great traditions.

His speech ended the Emperor descended from the dais and advanced towards the statue. Behind him walked the official delegates, the Duke of Gloucester leading the way, and the bishops holding up their golden crosses

which gleamed magnificently in the sun. As the party reached the statue the shroud of red, yellow and green in which it was hidden slid away.

The Emperor Menelek was commemorated in European fashion. The statue portrayed him seated upon his horse just as the various forgotten generals whose grimy memorials are so common in London are displayed. This was rather a disappointment to those connoisseurs of Ethiopic art who had hoped, perhaps, for something more characteristically national. The only hint of the exotic was the brightness of the gilt. The statue was, however, a sound enough piece of work and made a great impression, its emergence from its draperies being greeted with long applause. The Emperor paused a moment before the memorial as if in prayer, then walked to his waiting car. Immediately behind him throughout the ceremony there had stood a splendidly arrayed imperial lackey who held an ornate umbrella. He now took his place at the rear of the car and the procession prepared to move off.

At this moment there came a sharp word of command from the far side of the square where the detachment of Royal Marines from the British cruiser *Effingham* had been posted, and then there crashed upon the air the first notes of the Ethiopian national anthem played with cheerful precision by their band. The music, so loud and gay, was in striking contrast with the mournful harmonies of the Ethiopian musicians. In a flash its robust resonance had transformed the Great Square of Menelek into St. James' Courtyard and the Admiralty Arch.

The Emperor ordered his car to stop and listened with a cheerful smile while the band was playing. Then the procession continued on its way amid the cheering crowds. Meanwhile the chiefs filed passed the statue. Each man first kissed the steps of the monument and then embraced his neighbour—this being a sign that in reverence to the Emperor Menelek and his successors all Ethiopia was united.

"The Conquering Lion of Judah, Haile Selassie I, Elect of God, King of Kings, Emperor of All Ethiopia. . . ." Thus ran the impressive proclamation.

The solemn coronation of the Emperor was carried out with due dignity and all magnificence at the Cathedral of St. George. Like all the Ethiopian churches this is a small building, and the ceremony was therefore performed not within its walls but in a huge outer structure built specially for the occasion against the west door. Though only of canvas, this gave an amazing impression of space and solidity, for it was an extremely sound piece of work, the wooden supports being cleverly reinforced with steel. The total length of the annexe was over 200 feet, and the western end was raised three steps above the remainder to give the effect of a chancel. A curtain of crimson silk twenty feet high acted as reredos, before which, on three tables, lay the Imperial Mantle and the various items of the Ethiopian Regalia. Under a great canopy of red and gold stood the throne of the Emperor, placed at the entrance to the chancel and facing east.

The Emperor had spent the night in solitary vigil within the Cathedral, having driven there in the utmost secrecy in accordance with ancient custom. So secret was his arrival that the crowds which during the night were already thronging the street had no idea that their ruler had passed among them.

By seven o'clock in the morning the crowds were dense and within the sacred precincts notabilities were gathered in a dazzling array. The bright November weather—for that month is the late spring of the year in Abyssinia, was perfect, and light and warmth poured through the pure mountain air. The priesthood entered first to the number of close on two hundred chanting solemnly and holding aloft their glowing tapers. At length, when all were in position, the bishops commenced a slow and stately repetition of the words of the 122nd Psalm:



I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:

Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.

Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.

These magnificent words were of the Emperor's own choosing, and in their selection he had shown admirable taste, for they laid stress on the unity of throne and church, being also a message of peace to the tribes of his kingdom.

It was a splendid setting for the entry of the Emperor who repeated the words of the Psalm. He looked tired from his long vigil, yet in his eyes was a burning sincerity of purpose and the poise of his body suggested not so much triumph as spiritual exaltation. Before him were ranged the princes of the blood royal, each crowned; and behind were the governors of provinces, their cloaks richly jewelled and embroidered in beautiful colours. At their side were the envoys of foreign powers with their staffs, a brilliant muster of uniforms; and with each delegation was a high official of Ethiopia to act as guide and adviser.

The Duke of Gloucester, a distinguished figure in his uniform (which was that of the 10th Hussars) was close to the throne of the Empress, his suite ranged behind him. Nearby stood the Abuna, Primate of Ethiopia, with a magnificent golden mitre towering upon his brow and a cope of cloth of gold upon his shoulders. Five bishops attended him, their long cloaks of silver brocade sweeping the ground as they moved in slow procession to their

places, the gold crosses skilfully embroidered upon the backs of the robes glinting brightly. Ten young choristers in white and gold were also in attendance, while the remaining dignitaries of the Church wore brocade of red and green.

The head-dress of the principal bishops was a tasselled hood, but many of the lesser churchmen wore crowns of intricate design. Prominent among the bishops was the deputy of the Patriarch of Alexandria. His was a high degree of precedence since he represented the head of the Most Sacred Coptic Church.

Well placed in the body of the nave were scores of Europeans, either residents or visitors, who were present in good positions by special invitation of the Emperor; and behind was the great mass of chiefs from the outlying provinces. There had been many delicate questions of precedence to be dealt with in allotting their positions, for it seemed that the lesser the rank of a chieftain the more stoutly he would quarrel to assert it, but the Emperor had issued a tactfully worded instruction emphasising that all men were as nothing in the sight of God and within his holy dwelling and urging friendliness and forbearance. The message was supplemented by a definite warning from the King's High Minister that the slightest breach of the peace would be dealt with in exemplary fashion.

It was not this threat, however, which hushed into the deepest silence these rude warriors from the hills. For all their sorry records they were at heart true children of their Church. They might pay off a score from time to time in murderous fashion, but always they would ask the blessing of God upon their venture, pausing perhaps in a wayside church to pray that they might find their enemy at home; and now, proud participants in the most sacred rites of their faith, they had laid aside all thoughts of old quarrels. Not one unhappy incident marred the whole proceedings though often life-long enemies were side by side.

Near to the provincial chieftains, their neat uniforms a strange touch of western life amid the barbaric lions' mane head-dresses which surrounded them, was the band of the Royal Marines, to whom, as a signal honour was entrusted the playing of the Ethiopian National Anthem at the very moment of the coronation.

As soon as the Emperor was seated and the repetition of the psalm had ceased a second procession, that of the Empress and her Ladies in Waiting filed into view. The Empress, whose face was hidden by a long white veil, wore flowing robes of white silk and moved with great dignity amid the glistening folds of the drapery. The Ladies of the Court wore bright colours, but all had white veils which fell neatly from the edges of the broad-brimmed felt hats. Standing beside the Empress were two of her closest friends, one a European, Frau Hartel, a German lady, who wore a white dress devoid of any ornament and surmounted by a short white cape.

The Crown Prince was seated on a throne of state at his father's left hand, while little five-year old Makonnen, the Emperor's youngest son, sat on a low stool at his father's feet. The Emperor was a striking figure in a loose cape of heavy silk of spotless whiteness beneath which red trousers showed. While the Imperial Mantle and certain other regalia were placed upon him he was hidden from the gaze of the multitude by a curtain of white silk which the priests held before him, a custom going back at least two thousand years. The Mantle, a lovely robe of deep red velvet beautifully embroidered with gold, was fastened to the shoulders and did not conceal the white cloak below which served to throw into prominence the gorgeous colour and design. Red draperies, somewhat in Arab fashion, framed the keen face of the Emperor.

The first stage of the impressive ceremony was over. Now the Abuna came forward and called upon the Princes and Governors to behold their Emperor.

"O Princes of the Royal House, and Counsellors of the King, O Nobles of Ethiopia, Lords of the Church, Learned Teachers and Holy Priests, see here before you, a humble servant of the Most High God, Haile Selassie, descended from the line of Menelek, firstborn of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, a line of kings mighty and righteous which has endured without ever a break till this our time. To Him you shall give all obedience not in deeds only but even within your hearts!"

The proclamation was received in silence. Then, the Primate, placing his hand upon a gold-bound volume of the Holy Scriptures turned towards the throne.

"Do you, Haile Selassie, swear to uphold with all your strength the Holy Faith of the Alexandrine Church?"

"I swear it."

The Abuna again questioned:

"Do you swear to preserve the boundaries of your Empire and the lands of all your people, and will you continue always in good works, spreading instruction both in the things of the mind and of the spirit in places of learning consecrated to this purpose?"

The Emperor, his hand outstretched upon the Bible, swore that he would do these things. A book, richly bound, was handed to the Abuna who solemnly placed it before the Emperor. A pen was placed in his hand and he signed the written statement of the vows which he had sworn.

Meanwhile the perfumes of strange incense were spreading through the great tent from censers slowly swung by two priests with attendant deacons who approached the throne. Crosses were everywhere uplifted and the Abuna commenced the measured recitation of the 72nd Psalm.

Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son . . .

He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth: the poor also and him that hath no helper.

He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba, prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.

There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

The prayers of the Evangelists were now uttered in low tones by the priesthood, but at the words 'May the gifts of the Faithful ever be acceptable to our God,' the Keeper of the Royal Treasury came forward and placed upon the altar table ten ounces of pure gold, the offering

of the Emperor to the Church. There was next a reading from the gospels, a number of chosen deacons each taking the book in turn; and then came a solemn blessing of both Emperor and Empress.

The ten singers now advanced towards the throne, while the Archbishop of Lusta, taking in his hands the rich vestments came before the Abuna and offered them for his blessing. This done they were handed by the Abuna to the Bishop of the Northern Churches who, when he had pronounced his own blessing, approached the Emperor for the investiture.

At once the ten pure voices of the singers were raised in an old melody, the canticle commencing: "From my heart flow excellent words. . . ." Once more the forest of crosses was prominent in the gorgeous background and the censers were again swung to and fro. The singers paused at the words: "Gird your sword to your side in your splendour, in your Majesty. . . ." There was a moment of utter quiet, and then the High Priest of the South came forward with the Sword of Solomon.

The Abuna pronounced his blessing upon the glittering weapon, the hilt of which was wrought very richly, and then it was placed before the Emperor who rose to receive it.

"By this sword," cried the Abuna, "shall you do justice. You shall protect the Holy Church, succour the widow and the orphan and all who are oppressed by wrong; you shall restore that which lies in ruins and you shall maintain all that which you shall restore. With this sword you shall chastise the wicked and do the righteous honour; and every act you shall perform shall be in the service of Christ Jesus our Saviour!"

"May God make me worthy," said the Emperor, as he girded the sword at his side.

The sceptre was blessed and handed to the king, and next the orb was tendered in the same manner. Two bishops next approached and placed each a ring on

either hand of the Emperor. That on the left hand was a symbol of devotion to God; that on the right hand was a symbol of earthly glory.

"May your imperial splendour be bright even as these jewels," said the bishop on the right hand when the ring was in place. Next two glittering lances were presented, their surface magnificent with chased gold. The Emperor made a motion and from behind the throne the Master of the King's Horse came forward to receive the lances in token of his office. There was then a solemn pause.

The priests now commenced to chant the 44th Psalm, the choristers leading, and while they sang the Abuna solemnly anointed Haile Selassie, pronouncing as he did so these words: "As Samuel anointed David, as Zadok and Nathan anointed Solomon, I anoint you with this most sacred oil." The ceremony of anointing was performed in two stages. First with a light touch of his finger the Abuna anointed the Emperor's forehead, and then he bent his head in prayer. At the words: "May your heart delight in justice," the Abuna raised his head and touched the breasts of the Emperor. He then solemnly withdrew.

It was plain to every beholder that the ceremony was now approaching its climax. At a sign from the Abuna the choristers stepped forward in readiness, and then, as the high priest of Aksum presented the crown to his superior for the final act of coronation, there was a splendid outburst of singing, the words being those of the 45th Psalm—the fifth verse:

Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies . . .  
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the sceptre of thy kingdom  
is a right sceptre.

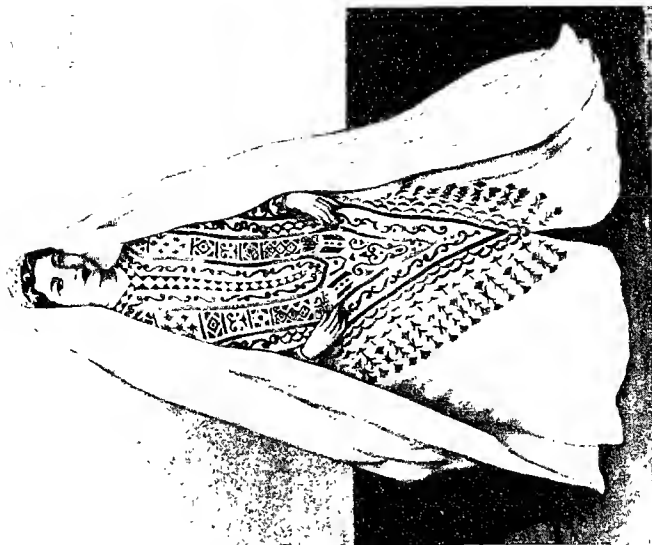
Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness, therefore  
God, thy God, hath anointed thee above thy fellows. . . .

With the imperial crown before him, the Abuna then read the 21st Psalm, a thanksgiving of David for victory and a prayer for further success:



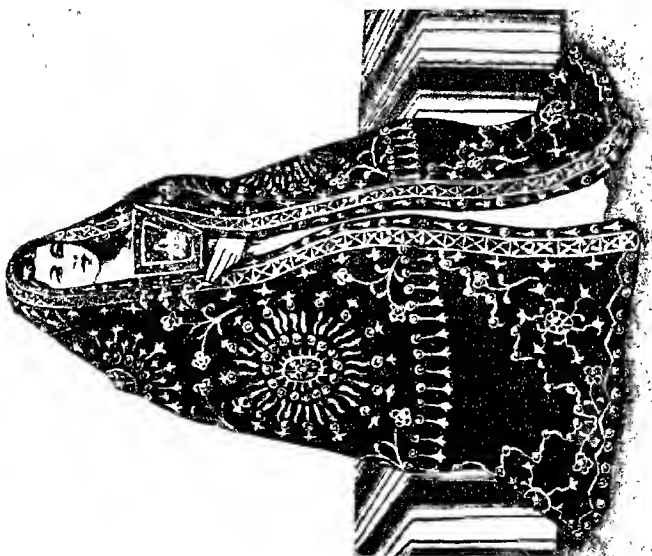
App A





LADY OF THE COURT

In embroidered robe—the amazing pattern is in red,  
green and gold



THE PRINCESS YUBDAR

The writer's mother—in her royal robes

The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice. . . .

Reading through these psalms again years after the ceremony it is noticeable not only with what perfect judgment they are chosen but how prophetic they were of the trials which were to come. The references to the plans of evil doers and the promise of God that they shall be thwarted:

“For they intended evil against thee, they have imagined a mischievous device which they are not able to perform. . . .” seem strangely applicable to later events. So also are the invocations to the hills which will protect God’s people. The fundamental link between Ethiopia and all Christian peoples becomes strikingly evident when it is remembered that the familiar lines of the Psalmist are their heritage no less than ours.

The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.

For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.

His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceedingly glad with thy countenance.

For the king trusteth in the Lord, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.

Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.

Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength, so will we sing and praise thy power.

When the last words of the exultant utterance of the Hebrew King who was also so supreme a poet had ceased there came a moment of breathless silence. Then, slowly, the Abuna advanced towards the Emperor and placed the crown upon his head.

"May God grant that this crown be a halo of holiness and glory. May you, by your prayers, preserve your faith unshaken and unconquerable. May you be pure in heart even as this gold is pure. And when this crown is laid aside may you gain instead a crown of life eternal."

The crowned monarch stood erect, his face uplifted, and the Abuna, also gazing toward Heaven, cried "Amen."

The Primate now retired and the Emperor stepped forward. Standing before the great assembly, a figure of kingly dignity—humility and exaltation blending in the poise of his slender form, he repeated in clear tones a passage from the Holy Book. Especially moving was the moment when with an almost saintly fervour he implored his God to aid him.

"I am the least of my brethren. . . ."

The words were spoken in a thronged gathering, yet it seemed to the listeners as though Haile Selassie was unaware of his surroundings and that his soul was alone with God. •

In the coronation of the Empress, which followed immediately, the Emperor played a part. The Bishop of the Southern Provinces made the first offering, a diamond ring of great value. "Let your faith shine even as these jewels," he said as he placed it upon her finger.

Meanwhile the Abuna had taken the Empress's crown and was holding it out towards her consort. The Emperor

took it in his hands for a few moments and then handed it back to his Primate, saying: "As I have been blessed to receive from your hands the Crown of Empire which our God has granted unto me, so now is it my firm desire that my Empress shall share in my glory, receiving from me this crown which I ask your Holiness to place upon her."

A blessing was pronounced upon the crown by the Abuna who then placed it solemnly upon the head of the Empress. She now came forward and made a deep obeisance to the Emperor, after which she received homage from the entire multitude who bowed their heads and murmured 'So be it. . . .' At this moment the ladies of her court burst into shrill cries of delight, a sound so strange to European ears that some of the visitors looked up in startled fashion to see what was happening. The cries lasted for some moments while four princes of the blood royal bowed humbly before the Empress and then filed into position behind her throne.

Now came the great procession of rejoicing, the most impressive spectacle that the streets of Addis Ababa had ever seen. Their Majesties, wearing full regalia, their officers of State attending them, walked to two open air thrones which had been erected in the great square. The envoys of the foreign powers walked behind them, the Duke of Gloucester, as guest of honour, leading the way. They emerged from the western door of the canvas sanctuary to be dazzled by the brilliant light of the Ethiopian skies and deafened by the roar of cheering which continued without intermission for the whole period of fifteen minutes or more during which their Majesties sat in State before the vast concourse of their loyal subjects.

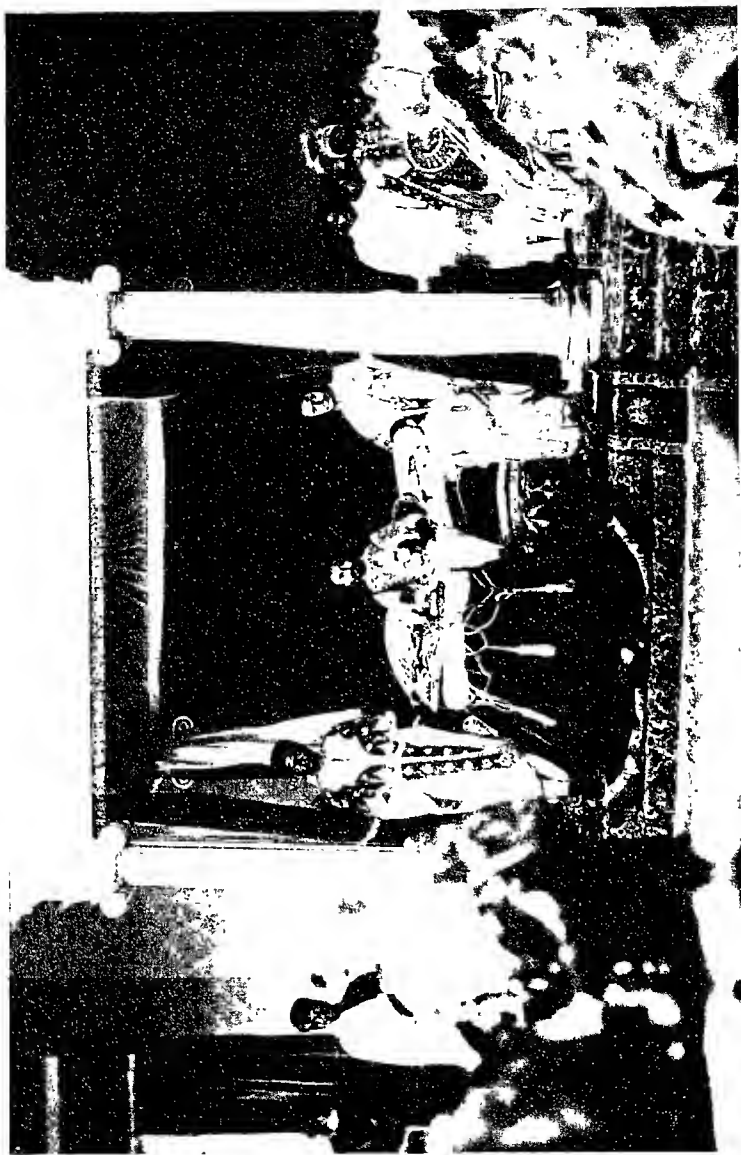
Then came the drive back to the palace between cheering masses of excited yet well disciplined crowds. A double file of soldiers had been set along the whole line of the

route yet so orderly were the people that there was little for the soldiers to do.

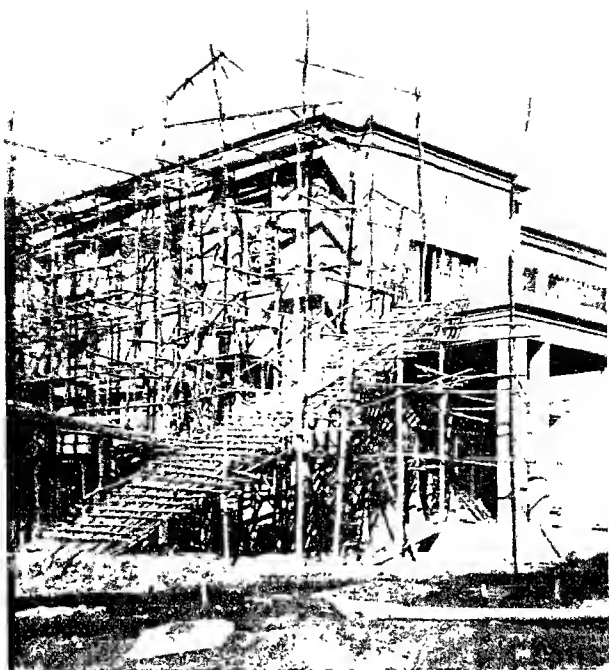
Before their return to the palace their Majesties witnessed a ceremonial dance of which the origins are lost in the mists of history. A band of twenty priests in two lines of ten facing each other, their silver sistra glistening, tinkling and throbbing weirdly in their hands, danced with the slow wavering rhythm of the ancient ritual. This was the dance of David before the Lord, a glimpse of Biblical lore made suddenly real and vivid to modern eyes.

A shortening of the prolonged and ecstatic evolutions of the ancient days had been decided upon by the Emperor out of deference to the comfort of his guests from overseas. Yet though the weird dance was robbed of the spell-binding power of endless repetition its strange beauty made an instant appeal to all who witnessed it. Those who "knew their Abyssinia" shook their heads however and said: "This would have lasted for hours in the old days. I expect the priests don't much care for having their ceremonies cut short like this." And then: "You must come to the next feast day of the Church if you want to see the real thing." Most Europeans who saw this dancing remembered the throb of the two huge drums which reinforced the rhythm beneath the free cadences of the sistra. It was easy to imagine the hypnotic effect which this rhythm might have exercised when sounding hour after hour.

On his way back to the palace the Emperor, though obviously tired out by the strain to which he had been subjected, looked very happy. The sun smiled down upon him and all around were resounding cheers. He had achieved his aim. Ethiopia was now recognised as a nation among nations. In a magnificent yet restrained and truly beautiful ceremonial he had glorified not only his own high office, but the people who looked up to him for guidance, and the God to whom he turned so constantly for help. Further, from the standpoint of less exalted considerations,



THE EMPEROR PROCLAIMS THE CONSTITUTION



THE PALACE THAT WAS BUILT IN TWELVE DAYS FOR THE  
RECEPTION OF THE CROWN PRINCE OF SWEDEN—WORK IN  
PROGRESS (Note interesting scaffold)



NATIVE LABOURERS AT WORK ON THE PALACE

*Face page 231]*

he had set a notable example in organisation to a land which had much to learn concerning this. The ceremony in all its complexity had proceeded without the least difficulty or delay. This was an achievement which an Englishman, used to the clockwork precision of the London pageants, would not value highly enough; but to those who knew Abyssinia the smoothness with which everything had moved came as a startling surprise.

Yet the procession ended on a note which must have seemed a knell of warning to many far-sighted spectators, including doubtless the Emperor himself. Out of the blue came a sudden roaring and seven aeroplanes swooped low over the city. Three were British, three displayed the Ethiopian colours, and one was Italian. The machines roared by and then returned. A flutter of white was seen in the air and then a cloud of papers floated earthwards. It was the proclamation of the coronation scattered abroad that all might read.

The natives of the capital and the vast concourse of tribesmen from the outlying provinces, to many of whom an aeroplane was an incredible wonder seen now for the first time, scrambled for these precious papers some of which are treasured still to-day as charms of great power. Little did they realise that these strange monsters who first alarmed and then delighted them might one day come with terrible cargo and shower flaming destruction upon their defenceless land.

There are many delightful anecdotes of the feasting which followed. Although the Emperor's staff served excellent food and exquisitely chosen wines, not all of his tribal guests were at home in the western atmosphere and there were occasional throwbacks to more primitive manners which annoyed the Emperor and delighted those of his European guests whose sense of proportion functioned. There were, too, occasional alarms and excursions behind the scenes owing to the misunderstanding of certain orders. The keeper of the palace



stores had been ordered not to part with anything to unauthorised persons and had probably been warned that if he did this and any shortage resulted he would be visited by his Royal Master's severest displeasure. True to his instructions he defended his storehouse with the utmost vigilance, and when the chef, to whom had been entrusted the preparation of a banquet which the Duke of Gloucester was to give in the Emperor's honour, came with a request for fuel he was required to produce an order. Time was precious and after much delay the order was not forthcoming since all the officials who might have given it were elsewhere at that time. The chef grew desperate. At length he managed to enlist the aid of an Ethiopian who had travelled widely in Europe and who understood the situation. This man pointed out to the store-keeper that the banquet for which the fuel was required was to be in the Emperor's honour; but it was no use. The man stuck to his point—no permit, no fuel. The chef and the westernised Ethiopian consulted together and decided on force. Making a concerted attack they seized and bound the protesting servant and carried off all the fuel that they needed. The situation was saved. The banquet was a great success.

The Duke of Gloucester was very popular in Addis Ababa, his distinguished bearing yet affable nature delighting all who met him. But it was the band of the Royal Marines which scored the biggest popular success. At first the inhabitants listened with puzzled faces to these unfamiliar sounds, but they soon learned to like them. There are several military bands in Addis Ababa to-day. It is a cult which may easily spread.

The banquets were consumed, the speeches were made, gifts were presented and warriors from the hills were feasted lavishly at the Emperor's expense. Then the Rhinoceros Express slid down the long incline toward the coast dragging carriage-loads of distinguished visitors back to Jibuti. Journalists, cameramen, authors, artists,

officials, all gossiped of their experiences and of the surprises with which the trip had provided them. Ethiopia had been placed once and for all on the map, and the general opinion was that it would stay there. No one talked of war or annexation. But in the foreign offices of Europe there were whisperings already of trouble ahead. Soon the pressmen were to find themselves once more at Addis Ababa—"The New Flower"—and under less happy circumstances. For the future was dark and uncertain. It was summed up with admirable brevity by an American 'observer' who when told that the name 'Haile Selassie' signified 'Might of the Trinity,' remarked, "He'll need all that—and more. . . ."

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE DAILY LIFE OF THE EMPEROR

THERE is probably no ruler in the world who has so hard a task as the Emperor Haile Selassie. He is the head executive of every department in the State, one of the few rulers who can say with truth: *L'État, c'est Moi!* Many observers have born witness to his constant devotion to duty and have pictured him in time of peace working a sixteen hour day, while in time of war he goes frequently for forty-eight hours or more without sleep. Lately, indeed, some of those close to him have been afraid that he was overtaxing his endurance, but his sleep, though scanty, is of satisfying depth and he rises after only a few hours completely refreshed.

This gift is of special interest since many great administrators have possessed it. So also is the fact of his extreme frugality at table. The food which is served is of the highest quality, but the Emperor is always sparing, especially in the consumption of meat dishes, while as far as wine is concerned although he has a cultivated palate and a very respectable cellar he is moderate to a degree. His mind, which he works to its utmost, is never clouded; his eye is always clear, his hand always steady. At heart he is a lover of ease, meditation, and aesthetic pleasures; but he is unswerving in his devotion to duty.

Between the hours of four and five in the morning he is called by his personal servant, who often finds the Emperor already awakened and in prayer. Having completed his devotions he passes at once to his study where the Ministers of State attend him. The first consideration is news. There are reports from every

seat of government which is connected to the capital by telegraph; there are the verbal messages of runners who have been sent by faithful chiefs who are watching the Emperor's interests in the more isolated districts; and there are confidential reports of happenings in and around Addis Ababa. Any replies which may be necessary are at once dictated, the Emperor glancing through the completed drafts and sometimes making additions and alterations in his own neat hand. In that first morning hour there is created a complete picture of the state of the country—that at least is the Emperor's ideal, though in practice there are often distressing gaps in the information received. Haile Selassie knows that accurate knowledge is the first essential of administration and since the early days when he would sit for hours at a time with contradictory and often lying reports before him seeking to divine the true facts through the haze of unreliable news, he has steadily improved his communications till now there is very little that happens of which he has not at least a fair inkling while concerning major events he is very well informed indeed. Even now that war has disturbed the system it is functioning far better than the war-correspondents realise. Accurate detail is slow in arriving but any success or reverse or sudden fever of activity in any part of the front is communicated to the Emperor with astonishing rapidity. He has made himself as it were the centre of a sensitive network of nerves. When anything happens he feels it. Pain is transmitted. Then later comes the knowledge of what caused the pain. That is perhaps the best way to describe a state of affairs rather puzzling to the European mind.

An amazing example of the way in which news was passed occurred about a year ago, when a syndicate of Greek and Armenian merchants attempted to profit from the disturbed state of the exchanges. At their headquarters in Jibuti they got together close on half a million francs with which they purchased Ethiopian paper money. This they changed into silver thalers in Addis Ababa,

and although they were compelled to spend a good deal on bribery to get this done, they calculated that if they could get the coin to Jibuti their profit would be close on one hundred per cent. It was of course forbidden to export money from Ethiopia, for the Emperor is extremely well advised on all matters concerning currency and has for the last ten years paid special attention to the development of banking facilities in his country; but the syndicate were convinced it could be done. Their plan was to despatch the money in several lots to some town near the frontier and then load it on to lorries which would make for British Somaliland by almost deserted routes. The first part of the plan worked well enough and the money was collected at Dire-dawa, but while the two lorries were being loaded by Somalis in a quiet part of the outskirts of the town an observant soldier noticed that one of the sacks, presumably of grain, took a good deal of lifting. He did not pass on his impression at once but he brooded on it and at last mentioned it to one of his officers who in turn went to the Customs House. Now the customs officers are perhaps the most active branch of the Ethiopian civil service—possibly because their job employs the instinct to plunder—and they realised at once that two lorries leaving by a lonely route with a heavy cargo constituted a case for investigation. They at once wirelessly Harar for military assistance and set off in pursuit. A force of cavalry trailed the lorries while a large body of foot-soldiers rushed across country to anticipate the caravan. Close to the border the two forces closed in. Each lorry had a machine gun and about a dozen Somali warriors as escort. There was a brisk battle in the open plain where cover was scanty and but for the fact that one of the machine guns jammed the losses of the attackers would have been extremely heavy. As it was the defenders were soon wiped out and the money brought back in triumph. The Emperor was informed within twelve hours, and his ministers were busy seeking to unravel the ramifications

of the plot in Addis Ababa. This episode was widely commented on by Europeans as indicating vividly the extent of the Emperor's power, and those who had always thought Ethiopia as fair game for the commercial looter were forced to make a rapid revision of their ideas.

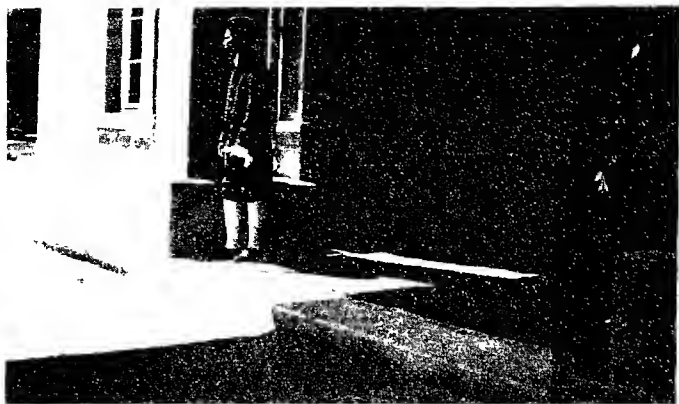
In his thirst for accurate information Haile Selassie has been pictured by certain rather imaginative American journalists as adopting the tactics of Haroun al Raschid and wandering incognito about his capital to collect first-hand impressions. This is an attractive story, and it is a pity to subject it to harsh examination but it must be set aside as sheer romance. The Emperor realises, however, the danger of receiving all his news through what might be termed the ministerial filter and he frequently talks with Europeans with the object of learning how the rumours of events have appeared to them. Particularly is this true of the British, whose candour he has always appreciated.

When the reports had all been dealt with it was in time of peace the practice of the Emperor to turn next to the issuing of instructions on matters of administrative detail. The list of orders given on the previous day would be placed before him and he would run rapidly through them requiring of the officials responsible evidence of progress having been made. He has an uncanny knack of perceiving the facts which an evasive answer attempts to conceal, pursues the truth with Socratic insistence, and administers sharp reprimand to any official shown guilty of slackness. At one time he was forced to accept with tact explanations which he knew to be highly disingenuous. It was impossible to imbue his executives with his own sense of urgency. One shifted the blame to another. He would be told on one day that building was delayed because the workers had arrived to find no material, on the next that the material was forthcoming but that the workers had been drafted to other employment. That has all been altered. When the Crown Prince of Sweden paid him a visit a palace was erected in twelve

days, armies of workpeople labouring under European direction with very creditable efficiency.

But to return to the Emperor's study. The orders for the day are given. There is now an interval while the Emperor drinks coffee, consumes bread and fruit and glances at the latest issue of his newspaper *Light and Peace*, the leading article of which is possibly his own handiwork, written with scrupulous weighing of words last night after a day of exacting duties. This paper appears once a week on the average but special issues are fairly common. It is printed in Amharic type and very well produced. Advertisements of gramophones, soaps, medicines, and luxuries of this nature are to be found in its pages, the goods being almost invariably French, since their source is Jibuti. There is not very much news and in the issues published prior to the outbreak of war there was very little reference to the coming struggle. Since the war began there have been brief bulletins and articles, 'clearly the work of the Emperor,' urging the Ethiopian case.

Work is resumed and consideration is given to more intimate affairs. Word has come of a dispute between two chiefs. It has not as yet reached a serious stage. Perhaps a word from the Emperor will check the trouble—it is an old grievance about some grazing rights. Belatin Getta Herouy has summed up the situation and makes tactful recommendations. He is perhaps the Emperor's most personal and trusted adviser, having served him faithfully since the days when Lidj Yassu reigned. He is said to be the power behind the throne and fantastic tales are told of his exploits as a spy. Actually he is an efficient secretary with little mysterious or sinister in his composition. Son of a peasant he has risen to high position and has travelled as his Emperor's representative in Europe, in the United States and in Japan. His two sons were educated in England, one at Cambridge and the other at Oxford, and they help in almost every national activity. The publishing of Amharic works is entrusted



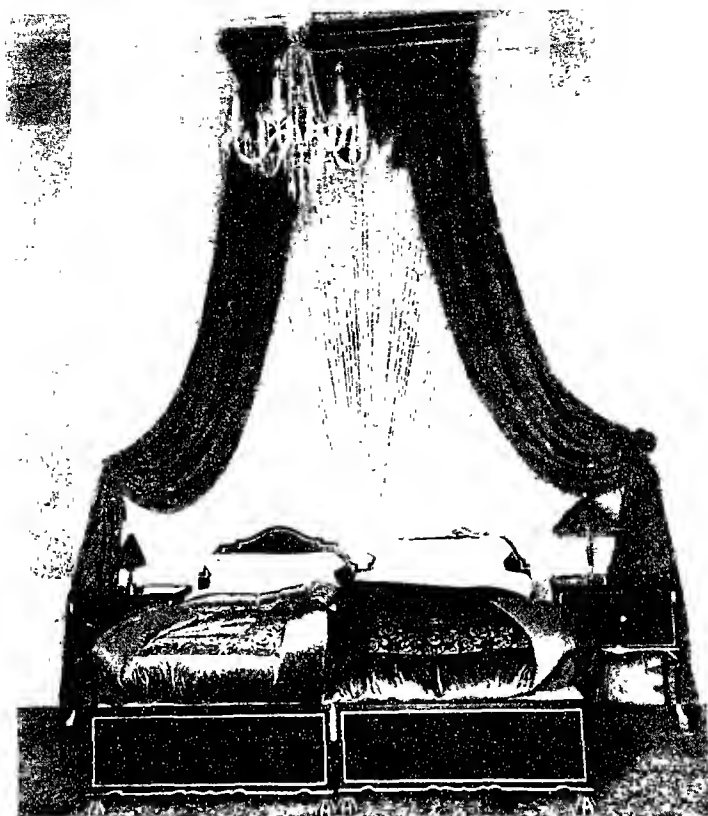
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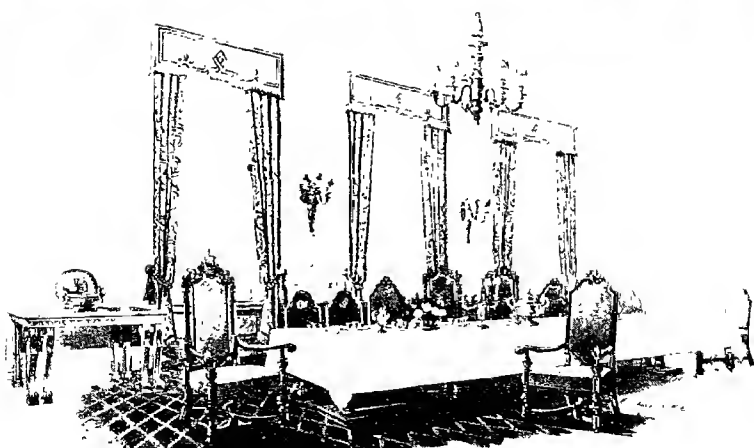
THE EMPEROR'S PRIVATE ROOM

*[Face page 238]*





IN THE ROYAL BEDCHAMBER



*Face page 239]*

THE ROYAL DINING TABLE

to Herouy and he is acting editor of *Light and Peace*. In style of dress he follows the Emperor—sun helmet, white shirt or tunic, white jodhpurs and a black cloak. He is at heart a simple man. Twenty years ago he saw in Ras Tafari the future ruler of his country, the coming man. Of a quiet disposition he loathed the rowdiness of Lidj Yassu, and while still in that prince's service transferred his allegiance to the present Emperor. Humble and unnoticed he was employed first in small things and then in greater and slowly the Emperor realised that here was a man who always spoke the truth to him and who carried out orders exactly. A strange, wordless friendship sprang up between the two men, and when, partly through the activities of Herouy, Lidj Yassu was overthrown, the faithful follower was made adviser to the Regent, whom he accompanied on his visit to Europe.

Herouy is said to have practised magic; he is credited with remarkable powers by some of the chiefs who believe that he can divine their thoughts and hear their words when far away. This comes from the fact that his agents have strict instructions to report the exact words of rebellious chiefs. Armed with these Herouy has often disconcerted secret opponents of the Emperor. Once he said to a proud but superstitious governor of a distant province: "On the Feast of St. John you swore that you were a better man than the Emperor and cared nothing for his displeasure. An angel brought me your words." The governor believed him, and from this incident there developed all manner of stories. Herouy did not deny them, but nevertheless it was his fundamental simplicity rather than his guile that baffled his foes.

It was frequently the duty of Herouy to present the emissaries of some European government. These receptions were in the days of the Regency of an informal character but the British representatives were always most punctilious in observing the correct forms and gradually as his power increased the Emperor developed a routine ceremonial, simple but dignified, for all such occasions.

The Emperor receives the visitors, speaking to them by means of an interpreter till he has summed up their intentions, and then if their frankness pleases him conducting an informal conversation in French. He does not speak English, but Herouy has recently been commanded to learn that tongue, a duty which he faced with misgivings since he is getting on in years. However, he has achieved fair mastery and is able to smooth the way for English speaking visitors.

One of the sights on which the visitors never fail to remark is the lions of which there are many round about the palace. Often the Emperor strolls in his gardens accompanied by two playful cubs. In the past there have been awkward moments. It is said that some years ago the English minister, who thought that a dangerous joke was being played upon him when he found the door of the Regent's apartments guarded by two lions, shot them both with his revolver. Actually he was not in any danger, though it may well be that it was intended to test his nerve.

The keeping of lions by the kings dates back to great antiquity in Ethiopia. Those who have studied the history of Egypt and the Near East know how frequently the bas-reliefs show a mighty ruler in pursuit of lions. There is a story of a King of Ethiopia who was hunting lions when he heard that his country was invaded. He refused to abandon the hunt. "First the lion—then the jackal," he said—a story which has a very familiar ring to English ears, being reminiscent, in fact, of Drake and his game of bowls. My father achieved the great distinction of being permitted to keep a lion by King Theodore. Here is his account of the matter:

"In Abyssinia nobody is allowed to keep a lion except the king and those who have permission from him. One day King Theodore sent a young lion to me by a soldier who had the little fellow in his arms. He was quite small and like a cat and I accepted the gift with thankfulness. At first I gave him milk, for he would not eat flesh, but

when he grew larger he was no more to be satisfied with milk only, so I gave him rough meat. He ate nearly one sheep every day, but the king supplied me with the needful food for him. After three years he grew into a beautiful animal and was really a kingly lion. He liked to play just like cats do and was very amusing indeed. We often played with him and let him run loose from his chain, giving almost complete liberty to move about. My daughter, who was then about three years old, rode now and then on the lion's back, but I was always at her side to hold her with my right hand while I led him with my left. He was very tame indeed, but when he fed he did not like anyone to watch him. His voice was so powerful that he made the air tremble as well as any cows, goats or sheep which were near him. I called him Hagos and he followed me like a lamb. When I was taken prisoner by King Theodore the lion was also taken and killed, and his skin was carefully prepared and presented to one of the bravest generals, who wore it on his shoulder to show his fearlessness and power and victory."

This was the experience of the father of the present writer as a lion tamer, and seems to show quite conclusively that it is not difficult to keep a lion as a household creature provided you start with the very young cub. Round the palace of Haile Selassie at least a dozen lions are to be seen. They are an emblem of kingship.

In the design of the uniform of his crack troops the Emperor was careful to include trimmings of lion's fur in the place of epaulettes and on the cap. This is a symbol of bravery to every Ethiopian and the uniform would not have been nearly so acceptable had it not made this concession to old custom.

Early in the afternoon the Emperor lunches sparingly, perhaps entertaining European visitors, and then enjoys a deserved rest. This respite is usually brief, however, for there is an endless round of inspections awaiting him. His troops, his schools, his hospitals—all these need his personal attention. Though he has twenty ministers

they are really secretaries rather than executives. The Emperor is active head of every department.

Those who know him are surprised at his varied knowledge. Books come to him from Europe on every subject and he never ceases to amass facts. Before the war cut short all his civic endeavours he had begun to study botany in search of methods by which the productivity of his country might be increased. Especially was he attracted to afforestation, always a good sign in a ruler since it denotes the gift of thinking and planning far ahead. The question of how to ensure the constant replenishment of forests depleted by the need for fuel has been several times a problem to Abyssinia. In the days of the Emperor Menelek the city of Addis Ababa was very nearly abandoned because the forest land surrounding it was being so rapidly denuded that it seemed the supply of fuel must fail. Menelek, acting on the advice of European ministers who did not relish the idea of removing their legations so soon after they had established them, was able to meet the crisis by importing the Australian eucalyptus tree which flourished abundantly and by reason of its amazingly quick growth saved the situation. These trees grow in great profusion around the capital.

Recently the Emperor has investigated the possibility of rubber plantations but conditions are apparently not suitable. However, science is taking a hand in the game and types of rubber tree are being evolved which have a far wider climatic range than those on which the world's supply now depends, and it may well be that in the future this product will be added to the exports of Abyssinia. It is unlikely, but just possible; and in any case the Emperor is to be congratulated on his enquiring mind.

During the early evening he consults with his financial advisers, comparing the records of tax returns and enquiring the cause of fluctuations. He has rapidly absorbed the principles of sound economics and understands very well the theory of taxation. In his early years as ruler he did

not sufficiently oppose the principle of taxing imports, especially luxuries, as much as possible. It was the old tradition of "squeeze." In the years prior to the war a very great change was observed by those familiar with the country. While the need of money still necessitated the imposition of dues the Emperor's enquiries were directed to schemes by which these might be lessened and in private conversation he revealed himself as a Free Trader, saying that it was the ceaseless erection of barriers to trade by governments who should rather bend their efforts to removing them that had caused the world slump.

Dinner may be a ceremonial meal with many visitors and elaborate courses or a comparatively brief affair if the Emperor is not entertaining and has work to do. In the event of a State banquet, or even entertainment on a much less scale, all the conventions of Europe are strictly observed. Invitation cards of plain design but excellent quality all bearing the royal crest in gold are delivered with due formality well in advance. The menu is printed sometimes in Amharic only, but often with the normal French names with which the European is perfectly at home. The guests assemble in a long anteroom and when all are present the Emperor appears to head the procession to the table having first received the salutations of the party and having spoken a few words of welcome to the guests.

The Swiss chef is a master of his art. It is his duty to taste all the food which comes to the royal table. The imperial family are not often together but when the only remaining princess dines with her father she wears a simple Paris gown in the most perfect taste. Nor is this refinement merely on the surface. The princess, although compelled by custom to a life of retirement, is well educated and has an excellent command of French and German. For some reason English does not come easily to the Ethiopians, while French they seem able to acquire with ease.

For all State occasions the gold plate purchased during the visit to England is used. Champagne is the wine most in favour, but though it is plentifully supplied by tall footmen in red coats and white breeches who are trained to perfection and stand behind every chair, the Emperor's glass is not often refilled. Frequently when the banquet is ended he goes straight to his study, lights the large reading lamp which stands upon his desk, and works there till morning guarded only by a single servant who stands outside the door.

The Emperor is air-minded. When he first visited Aden in 1923 he asked to be allowed to make a flight and did so in a seaplane while his suite held their breath. Since that day he has slowly improved the air force of his country which while it is still pitifully few in numbers and obsolete in design is nevertheless a remarkable achievement—in itself clear evidence of a civilised outlook. Not long ago he persuaded a high dignitary of the Church to make a flight—an affair which caused some scandal among the bishops, who have never for the most part ceased to believe that the aeroplane and the motor-car are inventions of the devil. The more open-minded of the priesthood point out, however, that it is on record in the Kebra Negast that the great Solomon received from God the secret of flight and consider that the Emperor's airplanes are in the best Solomonic tradition. Truly Ethiopia is a strange land.

Often in the evenings the Emperor goes through the great mass of press cuttings which are sent to him from Europe. When there is anything which he does not grasp he considers carefully which of the Europeans in Addis Ababa is likely to know most concerning the matter and the next day invites him to lunch or dinner. No one who has given the Emperor frank and disinterested advice has ever been forgotten by him. It may be some time before the opportunity offers, but always there is kindly and adequate recognition of the help received.

The Emperor has always been very accessible to

foreigners and journalists have never had any cause to complain of his treatment of them. The Emperor has, however, had some cause for complaint. Three or four years ago an American writer spent a few weeks in Abyssinia and was treated with great courtesy by the Emperor, whom, on his return to the States, he caricatured unmercifully, including even the Empress in his facetious paragraphs. This was particularly galling to the Emperor, who is a proud monarch but also a devoted husband and father.

His relations with the Empress Manen are an index to his simple, unchanging character. He married her twenty years ago before he began his struggle for the throne and has never had cause to regret his choice. She has been a loyal helpmate in countless ways of which the outside world knows little, and it is perhaps most to her credit that where she could not help she has not hindered. Much has been written of the hold which the Church exercises over her, and it is indeed true that she is dominated by the priests to a great extent, and that she moves about in public in the shelter of white awnings which she has been told will shield her from the 'evil eye.' But it is a great error to think of her as ignorant and a drag upon her husband. Though she lacks any education in the western sense of the word she has good sense in plenty and while she is intensely religious she has never allowed her devotion to the Church to make her the ally of the priesthood in their attempts to check her husband's plans. In some of these she has, in fact, been of great and unsuspected assistance to him, since not only is she influenced by the priests—she is not without her influence on them. In the matter of hospitals, especially, has she done good work. For the rest, knowing that she cannot assist the Emperor in his relations with foreign countries she remains discreetly in the background attending few ceremonies. With the outbreak of hostilities she came into the picture as a devoted patriot and her appeal to the women of Ethiopia was powerful and dignified. Until



the war she had lived in considerable seclusion frequently spending months at a time on one or other of her several estates. Her dislike of Italy has always been marked, but she is friendly with the wife of the British Minister and has a close personal friend in Frau Hartel, wife of the Court Architect, who it will be recalled was given a place of honour at the coronation. She has borne three sons and two daughters and has shown herself a devoted mother. She has of late years, however, centred her thoughts more and more upon the future life, and has lost much of her interest in the affairs of this world. The war has perhaps done her good in breaking what might easily have become a state of saintly lethargy.

The Emperor shows her great respect, and by his considerate treatment of his wife and his high moral standards has set a fine example to his people. Even those who like him least can have no ground for criticism in his marital life. In the midst of pressing affairs Haile Selassie would always give priority to a letter from his wife and he would deal with her requests with generosity and with scrupulous attention to detail. Not long ago they paid a private visit together to an old friend, the mother of one of the Emperor's most trusted advisers. She was too old to move with ease and so the Emperor and Empress went to take tea with her, a gesture of simple kindness of which only their closest intimates were aware. It was clear that the affection between the Emperor and his wife had remained undiminished.

Like Menelek, his great predecessor, the Emperor Haile Selassie has been much courted by concessionaires of many nationalities, a great number of whom have had the backing of their governments to a greater or lesser extent. Often in the course of the negotiations objects of great monetary value have been presented to the Emperor, but sometimes the donors have chosen the gift without the slightest knowledge of the conditions

of life in Ethiopia, and though the Emperor, realising that the spirit which prompts the giver is of more importance than the gift itself, has smiled graciously when accepting it he has sighed inwardly, wondering what on earth he is to do with it and grieving that money should have been wasted when there are so many things of which he stands in real need.

The custom of Ethiopia demands the exchange of gifts between those who meet ceremonially, who give and receive hospitality, or who pass one another in the hills or deserts, spending the night, for instance, at the same oasis or camping ground. But the Emperor is far too shrewd to value men in terms of the gifts they bring. "He has brought no present," said a minister, speaking of an engineer, who was clearly by no means well off. "Good counsel is better than any gift," said the Emperor. Haile Selassie was never to be won by lavish presentations. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* . . . "The size of the gift is sometimes a measure of the intended fraud," said a European diplomat who watched with cynical detachment the scramble for concessions.

It was this European, a man of great understanding, who asked me before his visit to Addis Ababa what gift I thought the Emperor would be likely to appreciate. "Give him a clock," I said—"a clock of chronometric accuracy, the sort of timepiece that need only be wound at intervals of a week or more and which will run a whole month and vary only a few seconds." The Emperor loves clocks. He knows that they measure the most important thing in life. He knows—and to his cost—that he is almost the only man in Ethiopia aware of that fact. He realises, too, the importance of training everybody to the use of the clock. In modern Ethiopia time is money.

In the present struggle some chiefs of the old school have expressed themselves as bitterly disappointed that the Emperor has not led his troops in person. Whispers have from time to time impugned the Emperor's courage. It is not fear of death that has prompted Haile Selassie to exercise caution in venturing within range of danger. The Emperor, though highly strung, is fearless. What holds him back is the knowledge that in modern war personal bravery counts for little. A stray machine gun bullet could in one second wipe out the progress of years—for were the Emperor to fall any resulting succession problem might divide and thus destroy his people. For divided they would have no chance against the designs of Italy.

That is the great personal tragedy of the Emperor—he can foresee so many consequences to which his light-hearted warriors are blind, and he cannot explain to them the reasons for his actions.

However, he has now learned to rely upon his eldest son, who now that his father has gone to Dessye to direct operations from nearer the scene of battle has been made commander of the defence force left behind in Addis Ababa, and has received the salute of a great mass of warriors in the last review held by the Emperor before he left the capital.

Though filled with a solemn resolve to defend to the last the independence of his country, Haile Selassie is a sad and disillusioned monarch as he leaves for his headquarters among the crags. His Houses of Parliament where he had hoped to see a version of democratic rule slowly develop are deserted; all his plans for the building of schools are postponed indefinitely; those schools already in existence are short of teachers for every man of ability can be found war-time work. The hospitals where he had hoped to found research clinics to combat the many diseases which prey upon his peoples are preparing to receive the thousands of wounded certain ere long to be flooding upon them and to cope with which they are

pitifully under-equipped. The words 'Light and Peace' on the front page of his newspaper have a strangely ironic appearance. Instead there lie over all Ethiopia darkness and war.

It is a dismal end to a period of nerve-racking strain. In the months during which the Italian plans for attack were maturing the capital was swept by rumours. To combat them both at home and abroad was one of the Emperor's chief anxieties. Yet often—so great was the difficulty of getting at the facts—the official denial came weeks after the event. The Italians were particularly unscrupulous in alleging outrages, and 'incidents' were very hard to prevent. The Gondar affair was typical.

The attack on the Italian consulate at Gondar has been very much discussed. The facts seem to be that it was not inspired by anti-Italian sentiment and was merely a local feud which happened to centre round the consulate because the pretty servant girl who was the cause of the dispute worked there. It was a very old story. The girl had two suitors, a poor man whom she loved, a rich man whose gifts attracted her. She tried—as so many women have done—to make the best of both loves. She herself had aroused the secret passion of another servant in the consulate and he, despairing of success in his pleadings, turned against her. Knowing that she was going to receive her poor lover he stole out to the rich one and told him how he was deceived.

Humiliated and indignant, the unfortunate man first tried to drown his sorrows, and then, his courage mounting, collected a gang of hangers on, who, in return for free drinks all round, agreed to beat up his rival and deliver the girl into his hands. The fact that the happy pair were on Italian soil did not enter into the calculations of the attackers. The result of their expedition was a brief "free for all" outside the consulate. It is doubtful if any serious attempt was made to enter or to damage the building.

Everyone in Gondar treated the affair as a huge joke,

more especially since the rich man, having quarrelled with one of his boon companions, was himself beaten up. Even the Italians, after their first very natural scare was over, are said to have joined in the general laughter. But the official report of the affair grew in seriousness till it was represented at Addis Ababa as a desperate attack of armed ruffians who were out to murder everyone in the name of patriotism; while by the time it reached Italy it was news for the front page of the newspapers—an insult which must be avenged with blood.

The Italian propaganda claims that the attack, which resulted in the death of one Askari and the wounding of two others, was actually led by the local police. If that is so they did very little damage. The Ethiopian reply is that the whole affair was a private quarrel, that no police were mixed up in it, and that the reason why there was no serious punishment was that the whole matter was a trivial drunken brawl.

While drunken brawls on the doorstep of the consulate of a foreign power are obviously not to be justified, they provide no legitimate excuse for the annexation of an empire. It must be plain that had the attack been seriously planned no occupant of the premises would have survived. The Ethiopian version, which is in many particulars confirmed by impartial Europeans who saw the free fight—a fortunate circumstance, since so often in this dispute the outsider has only two flatly contradictory statements to go on—rings true. It is a typical network of love intrigues winding up in a glorious battle. If any one was killed, and this is doubtful, it was just an accidental death in a land where tempers are fierce and human life not valued very highly in moments of passion. Travellers have described southern Italy as such a land.

Yet one can imagine the anxiety of the Emperor seated at his desk grappling with conflicting reports of the Gondar affair and knowing that fantastic lies were being spread in Europe concerning it.

This picture of the life of the Emperor has been difficult to write, for it was not easy to record the details of the devoted and strenuous but nevertheless peaceful and distinguished life which he led in the days before the war, with the knowledge that now all that is over and the Emperor is once again a soldier ringed in by enemies fighting desperately for existence as so many of his ancestors fought before him. But it was right to picture him as he was in those days since it is as a man of peace that he will take his place in history. And Europeans of every nation reading of the centre of progress and true culture which the Emperor succeeded in establishing in the face of great odds among his great but retarded nation will wish wholeheartedly that he may be spared to continue the work so splendidly begun.

## CHAPTER XXII

### AN EMPEROR WORSHIPS

THE hold which the Church of Ethiopia exerts upon the whole land is manifested in many ways. Most striking of all is the way in which the many fasts are observed. No fewer than one hundred and fifty-three days are marked out in the Calendar as dedicated to special ceremonies of the Church, and fasting is prescribed for at least half of this number.

There are differences between the Ethiopian and the Western Church calendars. The Ethiopian New Year begins on the 11th September and at the end of that month there falls the impressive Feast of the Cross. Eastertide comes a week later than in Europe and is preceded by a Lenten period of forty days during which fasting is rigorously observed. Meat may not be eaten, and as there is no fish to be had in the country the diet during the time of fast is perforce monotonous in the extreme. A kind of unleavened bread is eaten made in thin cakes and surprisingly nutritious. Travellers have borne witness to the amazing abstinence of all classes during the period of fast. Even men of the lowest character, if they are members of the Coptic communion, will not break the law of the Church, whose edicts are minutely followed even when men are out in the hills and free from all possible chance of observation. The reason is that a widespread belief exists that should a man break the law of fast his virility will be lost.

Saints' days exist much as in Catholic countries, and many of the Saints are well known to the West. The story of St. George and the Dragon, for instance, has its counterpart in Ethiopian lore. As told by the Coptic

priests it is very like the story of Perseus and Andromeda but no student of mythology has yet managed to trace it to its source.

As for miracles, the stories of these are plentiful. There are also legends, certainly founded on fact, concerning great heroes of the early days who rallied the Christians against the Pagans and performed prodigies of valour.

The chief interest to the student of the ritual of the Coptic Church lies in the fact that by careful deduction it is possible to reconstruct much concerning the faith and practices of the early Christians from an examination of the Ethiopic religion of to-day. A single glance at any of the churches reveals that the plan of the Jewish temple has been preserved in all its main features unchanged through the years. One fact is curious. Steeples are regarded by the Ethiopians as unholy things. All their churches have domes, though they are mostly so small that cupolas is perhaps a better term. The reason for the hatred of steeples is that so many of the cults with which the Egyptian Christians were surrounded, the ancient faiths of Egypt, Minoa and Greece, worshipped fertility both in the earth and in the human body, and used as a symbol of the force they worshipped obelisks and columns of various strange designs. Thus any structure towering up to a point became anathema to the Egyptian Christians, for they thought of it in terms of the sensuous and barbaric cults whose influence they were always fighting.

In western Europe, on the other hand, where the existence of "phallic" cults was forgotten, the spire became a symbol of man's reaching out to heaven, and produced feelings of spiritual sublimity. Yet traced to its earliest forms the Gothic principle, so magnificently embodied in the beautiful cathedrals of Europe, has, it must be admitted, its origin far back in the dark beginnings of man's worship.

So the Ethiopian church has no steeple. Upon the



cupola there is usually a cross, but the eight-pointed star, a design akin to the Jewish symbol, is frequently found. Those who have often wondered how the "Easter Egg" became part of Christian custom, will be interested to know that ostrich eggs are part of the design of Ethiopian church decoration. This is doubtless a survival of fertility worship, which, because its associations are less noticeably pagan, has survived.

Music plays a great part in the religious ceremonies of the West, but the dance has completely disappeared. In Ethiopia it survives in amazing forms. David danced before the Lord, and doubtless much the same rhythms and patterns of motion are to be found in Ethiopia to-day. The spell-binding effect of reiterated rhythm, and its power to separate the mind of the devotee from bodily considerations, is recognised by the priests who use music and dancing as means of approach to religious ecstasy. The European observer who feels superior to these ancient rites and who thinks that their power can affect only the native mind, soon finds that he has underestimated the mysterious fascination of the ceremonies. The music is all very soft and low, with hardly any phrases recognisable as tunes to the western ear; but as the drums repeat their hollow and droning rhythm, the strings of the lutes throbbing in sympathy, great distances open up within the listener's mind. It is as if the music were exploring the hidden places of the human soul, and the mind can travel with it, meeting face to face with unutterably beautiful, yet vast and terrible realities.

Within the gloom of the church, whose windows are few and let in only a mysteriously tinted ghost of the bright sunlight outside, the music continues. Incense wreathes up in steady wisps from the inner altar and is perceived above the screen which hides the Holy of Holies from the worshippers' eyes. The lulling yet faintly bitter perfume spreads into the air. The music grows more insistent in its assault upon the senses. The world

which they perceive grows all the while less real. . . .  
"I felt as though I had been on a long and wonderful journey, but could remember nothing of the strange sights I had seen," said an Englishwoman who obtained permission to attend a Church ceremony.

The churches are for the most part so small that many of the great celebrations of the feast-days of the saints, for which all the hill tribes and even the inhabitants of distant provinces descend upon the capital, are held in the open air. A huge tent is erected sometimes in a public square, often in the pastures on the outskirts of the town.

A linen screen, supported by a host of white-robed servitors, hides the dais either at the far end or in the centre of the tent on which, surrounding the golden throne of the Lion of Judah, are to be seated all the great chiefs who have come to pay homage to Emperor and Church.

When all are seated the screen is rolled away. Voices are hushed into silence. No one moves. On the sides of the tent the silken tapestries, stiff with elaborate brocade, glitter faintly in the dim light. Underfoot are Eastern rugs, heavy in pile, glorious in texture, mysterious in design.

The beat of drums, the plaintive chanting of voices rising and falling in an Eastern version of the Gregorian scale, announce the approach of the royal procession. There is no blaring of trumpets, nor is there any military rhythm in the sound of the drums. This music is wild, but it is not the wildness of war. It has neither beginning nor ending.

As the King of Kings passes every head in the huge crowd is bowed. Beneath a gorgeous umbrella the Lion of Judah sits impassive, acknowledging no salutes. He enters the tent and is seated upon the throne of his fathers, a seat of ancient workmanship, massive with ivory and gold.

Other processions, bright with banners, converge upon

the tent. First come the priests of the provincial churches, each group with a vivid banner; and then comes the procession of the Apostles, twelve priests each with a golden cross or other emblem of the church. Each wears a crown of gold upon his head, and as the procession turns towards the sun there is a flash of unbearable brilliance all along the line. The trembling banners blaze with colour. The bright light of the eastern sky seems to vibrate in tune with the unending throb of the drums.

In the tent the Emperor Haile Selassie listens as the priests read out the Scriptures. The Geez language is unfamiliar to the Amharic population, but the Emperor is a fine scholar and knows the priestly language better than many of the priests themselves. When the passage allocated to the ceremony has been read in an awe-inspiring tone by the Abuna or by the chief priest, the huge gold-encrusted Bible is borne by attendant monks to the foot of the Emperor's throne. Question and answer are exchanged in low voices, much like the responses in our own Church. Then as a sign that he is at peace with God, and that this peace may be shared by all the virtuous among his subjects, the Emperor bends down and lays his forehead against the open page, afterwards kissing the great volume, murmuring as he does so a final prayer.

The book is carried back to the sound of louder music, for now that reconciliation of Man with God has been made it is right to rejoice. As the music and chanting die down, the cymbals clash faintly and there is a whispering and chiming of the sistra which are shaken by the priests. These instruments, ancient as Egypt, consist of a metal frame shaped like a tennis racket, across which are strung three or four hollow metal bars. These are frequently shaped like serpents and in the loop where the head twists round, outside the frame, small metal bells are often hung. If there are no bells it is the bars themselves which ring when the frame is shaken. The effect is very mysterious when the instruments are in the hands

of carefully trained exponents of the priestly tradition, for there is a queer flatness of tone which strikes in most fascinating fashion upon the western ear. You can never be sure what the pitch is, and no sooner are you used to a note than it has melted into another, equally elusive.

To music such as this the priestly dance begins.

So heavy are the robes that no rapid movement is possible. The feet of the priests do not move in any direction, but perform a set pattern round the spot where they stand. It is the swaying of the body in sympathy with each faint crescendo of the music that brings the element of rapture into the dance.

Line by line the priests come forward. Then slowly they retire. The sistra cease to rattle, only the throb of the drums remains. This, too, ceases. There is silence. A shudder of release passes through the assembly. Slowly the banners form themselves into line of march. God has been worshipped. Haile Selassie has made truce with heaven for his people.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE REVOLT OF RAS HAILU

As we have seen the throne of Haile Selassie has several times been in grave danger, but by shrewd diplomacy he has always managed to divide the forces ranged against him. The Ras Hailu conspiracy, however, came perilously near to success. Its leader was a bold and determined chieftain with great resources, and but for an error of judgment, which arose from a queer flaw in his character, he might well have carried all before him, so well did he choose his time.

I only met Ras Hailu on one occasion and that I have already recounted. It was while the Emperor was in England, and I felt instinctively that the towering chief who accompanied him was a man of ill intent. But it is only right to add that the feeling of uneasiness with which his expression sometimes inspired me was to a large extent offset by his undoubted powers of fascination.

He was a magnificent figure of a man, smooth, shining ebony. Even in European clothes the barbaric freedom of his stride was a pleasure to see and his dignified reserve was tempered by a charming smile.

In Europe, however, he showed his best side. In his own province he was a grasping, unscrupulous ruler, suspected of conniving at the slave trade from which it was said that he obtained handsome profits. These he hid in secret places, turning them always to gold, precious stones or other easily portable wealth. After his visit to this country he realised that the safest place for him to keep his money was in foreign banks, and I believe that in Switzerland he has still large balances.

His miserliness was a by-word in Ethiopia. Whenever bills had to be paid it was always the same story. The handsome chief would protest with tears in his eyes that he was a poor man, that his cattle had died of pestilence, and that his creditors were taking the roof from over his head. He only paid when he had to, and it was noticeable that if any persistent creditor were not strong enough to protect himself occasion was found to entangle him in the law and fine him (for the benefit of Ras Hailu) a sum considerably in excess of the debt.

Only the fascination of western luxury could turn Ras Hailu from his miserly ways. When in Bond Street or Rue de la Paix he would succumb to the lure of the shop windows and spend on a fantastic scale.

These orgies of spending his subjects had to pay for, and it was not long before his exactions led them to protest against his rule. Under pretence of a trading journey a number of the most prominent inhabitants of his province (the rich land of Godjam) came to Addis Ababa to lay their case before the King of Kings.

Haile Selassie was well informed of the situation in Godjam and resolved that the time had come to break Ras Hailu's power. He listened sympathetically to the petitioners, ordered that they should be compensated from his own funds and then issued proclamations depriving the unjust chieftain of his power to levy dues. It was not possible at this stage to deprive him of his rank, but the measures taken by the Emperor aimed at gradually curbing the illegalities of this tribal 'racketeer.'

Ras Hailu was shrewd enough to see that deprived of financial jurisdiction he would soon become a mere cipher. He knew that he must strike back at once before his name ceased to inspire fear. He was not long in finding a plan.

While he had no claim to the throne himself, he knew that he could easily find some claimant whose cause he could back, for the dynastic tangles of the Ethiopian succession had left a good many loose threads all waiting

their chance to become main strands in the pattern once again. Ras Hailu, from the promising material at his disposal, selected the captive Lidj Yassu as his choice for the imperial throne.

Lidj Yassu had (as has been shown) an excellent claim, for he was the grandson of the great Menelek and had been definitely appointed to succeed him. That he was never crowned was due in the main to his own lack of courage. Later the priesthood turned against him, the reason being that they did not trust his devotion to Christianity, but he would have been in a much stronger position to have fought them had he been duly crowned.

His Islamic leanings, which the priests suspected, were inherited. His father, Ras Ali, governor of Wallos, was a Mussulman, but Menelek, who knew him to be a capable ruler, offered him a choice between Christianity or execution, in which circumstances he had been 'converted.'

He had never liked his new faith, had secretly trained his son in the worship of Allah, and had offended the Church by the manner in which he mocked at Christian rites even while observing them.

Lidj Yassu might well have survived the disapproval of the Church, had he not preferred the pleasures of the palace to the toils of active government. In view of the many charges which have been made against him it is only right to say once again that he was a very charming fellow and stories of his tyranny were possibly exaggerated; but there can be no possible doubt that he neglected his duties, while it was sheer madness on his part to support the "Mad Mullah" of Somaliland who attempted a Moslem revolt against England and Italy. In 1916, having been finally convicted of Moslem practices he was solemnly excommunicated by Mattheos, the head of the Coptic Church.

It is not generally known that in the conspiracy against him by the British Secret Service, the details of which

were given in a previous chapter, the late Colonel Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") played an obscure but doubtless significant part. I have given some pains to unearthing the exact story of the Colonel's activities but all to no avail. For the present it must suffice to say that it appears that the artist in revolt paid a brief visit to Ethiopia, after which things happened—which was usually the case when Lawrence was anywhere about.

Poor Lidj Yassu, he never knew what brains were pitted against him. He was hardly aware of his danger when sentence of excommunication was passed by the Church. This meant that the oaths of allegiance sworn to him no longer held. His followers thereupon deserted and he became a fugitive.

He escaped to the ghastly Danakil country and lived for many months in terrible danger. Had he remained there he would never have been caught, but the privations which he suffered gradually drove him to work his way back into the province of Tigre, where he obtained some support from time to time but was eventually captured in 1921.

Haile Selassie had not at this time become Negus. He still occupied the office of Regent in conjunction with the Empress Zawditu, and his powers were limited. But when the Empress would willingly have ordered that Lidj Yassu should pay the standard penalty for rebellion, Haile Selassie, far shrewder than his co-ruler, urged that his life should be spared.

Haile Selassie knew that martyred rebels have a way of becoming legendary heroes and doing far more harm after death than they have accomplished while alive. With several million Moslem subjects to consider he urged that it would be better that Yassu should be placed in honourable captivity. The prince, he observed with characteristic insight, was not ambitious at heart. An easy life in luxurious surroundings would content him. He would soon become too easy-going to wish to rebel and would cease to be an heroic figure to his sympathisers,



who as Moslems required austerity and strength in their leaders.

It was not very easy, however, to arrange for imprisonment of the kind Haile Selassie suggested. The first Ras to whom Yassu was confided gave a knowing wink, and proceeded to lay careful plans for the poisoning of his "guest," thinking that although the Empress and Regent had said nothing of this, it was the best way of winning their favour. It was only by the merest chance that Haile Selassie learned what was afoot and he at once removed Lidj Yassu from danger. Another place of safety was found, but here the captive nearly met death at the hands of a minor chief, one of whose brothers had been killed by the Moslems and who sought to avenge his family. After this it was plainly hinted to Haile Selassie that he had better kill Lidj Yassu at once and have done with it, for as long as this claimant to the throne lived there would be trouble. The Regent would not consent, however, and this clemency came near to costing him his throne.

Ras Kassa, a trusted friend of Haile Selassie, at length undertook to answer for the safety of Yassu. The captive was imprisoned in easy circumstances in the town of Fitché, the Ras swearing solemnly that he would forfeit his life should his prisoner escape him.

A very dear friend of mine, an English traveller (whose story could he be persuaded to tell it, would lift the veil from many dark places in Ethiopian history), visited Lidj Yassu in confinement and found him a charming and very studious man, whose weakness for champagne—which my friend shared—was a bond between them. He seemed well content with his lot, and harboured no serious thoughts of rebellion, though escape to Europe would have pleased him.

For eleven years he was captive. Then one day a bribed guard whispered to him that the great Ras Hailu planned to free him, to make him Negus Negusti—King of Kings—for by this time Haile Selassie was sole ruler

upon the Imperial throne, and to displace him meant to secure complete sovereignty of all Ethiopia.

The great Ras Hailu was no fool, at least so far as the earlier stages of his plot were concerned. Deprived of his chief sources of income by the decrees of Haile Selassie which openly branded him as an oppressor and a thief, he knew he must strike back without delay for with every month of waiting his prestige dwindled. He could not corrupt Ras Kassa, but a renegade Moslem among the guards had proved easily corruptible, and had consented to keep him in touch with the captive claimant to the throne.

Telling Yassu to be ready for the signal to escape, Ras Hailu next began to organise his revolt. He attempted to win both Moslems and Christians for his cause, spreading the news among the Christians that Lidj Yassu had been converted as the result of a vision, and, at the same time reminding the Moslems that the success of one of their faith would bring them greater privileges. Meanwhile he was very submissive to the central government of Haile Selassie, and was careful to refrain from interference with the imperial tax collectors who were trying to place the fiscal system of his province—which he had tampered with to such an extent that it was based on little more than sporadic confiscation—upon a just and equitable footing.

The day which he had chosen for his coup d'état was that of the marriage of the Emperor's son. A huge feast was to be held at Addis Ababa; there would be carousing for several days, and military discipline would be slackened. All of the chieftains would be called to the capital for the great occasion—among them Ras Kassa. Nor would the festivities be confined to Addis Ababa. In every smaller city, in Fitché, for example, where Yassu was imprisoned, local celebrations would be in full swing.

Hailu had distributed enough (but only just enough) largesse to win over sufficient warriors to form a nucleus for his rebel army, and he now sent a detachment of these

to hide in the hills and watch the roads to the capital. The others he mustered under his own command to wait in readiness for the escape of Lidj Yassu. Once this was accomplished he proposed to proclaim Yassu as Negus Negusti and march on Addis Ababa. It was his idea that many of the lesser chiefs present at the feast would desert to him as soon as the attack began, for he thought that they would be bitterly envious of the luxury of the capital and would be ready to seize any chance to loot.

The scheme was well conceived, and at first all went well. A bag of silver thalers was smuggled to Yassu by means of the Moslem guard, and as soon as Ras Kassa had left for the wedding feast at Addis Ababa the pretender to the throne began a judicious distribution of this money, hinting at the same time that a huge revolt was already in progress and that he would soon be Emperor, in which event he would be able to give rich rewards to those who aided him now.

He had always been popular with his guards and in the excitement of the feast day some had been drinking and boasting that they were going to be the new Emperor's personal bodyguard and live in splendour at Addis Ababa. Their native cunning, however, made them preserve a line of retreat and it was agreed that Lidj Yassu should not be set at liberty but should be allowed to escape. Then if things went wrong, they argued, it would be possible for them to say that they had not been parties to the plot.

There must have been a pleasant flavour of comedy in the proceedings at Fitcha that evening. The drunken guards with shouts and much self-congratulatory merriment all helped in the digging of a hole in the walls of Lidj Yassu's house, that at least is the story which came to me. Certain of the guards in the town were not party to the plot, and to evade them it was arranged that Yassu should be smuggled through the compound gate in women's clothes. It was arranged that a girl in a very bright red robe should be admitted to Yassu's apartments during daylight so that the guards seeing a figure in this

same robe leaving under cover of darkness would ask no questions. This part of the plans worked to perfection. At last the hole was completed, and after a final round of toasts Lidj Yassu was spirited away in the girl's disguise to the outskirts of the town, where he mounted a horse which Ras Hailu had sent him and rode to a rendezvous where a chief named Gussessay was awaiting him. They were to gather what support they could and then to move to the westward to link up with the main body under Ras Hailu.

That their chance of success was quite good is undoubtedly true. Hailu's plans have since been described as a wild folly, but in fact they were sound. The district in which Gussessay was waiting was by no means blindly loyal to Haile Selassie who had been attacked a good deal in secret by the priesthood for his fondness for foreigners and his innovations in the western style, also for his courageous attempts to suppress slavery.

Ras Hailu was justified in counting on this. So far he had planned shrewdly. But the fatal kink in Hailu's character now proved his undoing. When it had been a matter of getting Lidj Yassu out of his prison he had been willing to spend money, but it had hurt. Now that his object was apparently effected his well-known meanness got the better of him. He had promised Gussessay a large sum of money to be paid as soon as Lidj Yassu joined him. But the money did not arrive. Instead there were excuses and more promises.

These seemed a bad omen to Gussessay. He was now far involved in treachery to Haile Selassie and it appeared that Ras Hailu, on whom so much depended, was not a man of his word. Furthermore Gussessay did not care much for the look of Lidj Yassu, who seemed a good-natured bounder rather than a determined rebel upon whose brow could be seen the aura of success.

Confinement and self-indulgence had developed Yassu's tendency to corpulence. His demeanour was anything but warlike. Actually his subsequent wanderings showed

that he was of tougher fibre than Gussessay realised. He had been a good athlete in his youth.

It is not difficult to reconstruct the first night of Yassu's freedom. The cautious Gussessay (it is really extremely puzzling to know how to write his name in English) did some very quick thinking and came to the conclusion that he was backing the wrong horse.

Once decided as to this he acted swiftly. Still keeping up the appearance of great cordiality towards Yassu he sent a couple of picked men to carry the news of the revolt to Addis Ababa.

After the first day of feasting the capital was in joyous mood. There was no thought of possible treachery in Haile Selassie's mind. Ras Hailu had not been invited to the ceremonies since he was in disgrace, but arrangements had been made to keep a watch on him, and apparently there was nothing to fear from that quarter. It was afterwards discovered that the Emperor's spies had been deceived as to Ras Hailu's intentions, thinking that the mustering of men was merely a gathering for local festivities and that when they realised that a movement of troops was in progress had attempted to send word only to find that it was too late. Ras Hailu's men held the roads.

At that time, in fact, though no one in Addis Ababa suspected it, the capital, though not yet encircled, was completely cut off from news.

The runners dispatched by Gussessay were good servants. Partly on horseback, partly on foot, they pushed on to the Emperor's city in a mad race against time. Already the drums were beating for revolt in the northern and eastern provinces and soon Ras Hailu's cause would have gained dangerous momentum. But the runners got through with their news.

It is easy to imagine the consternation which these two breathless and ragged messengers caused when they gasped out their evil tidings to the Emperor and his assembled guests. For a moment there was almost a panic. Then the Empress took charge. This strong-willed

and courageous woman had held apart from the celebrations and her mind was clear. She questioned the two messengers carefully, convinced herself of the truth of their news and immediately imparted the results of her questioning to her husband who soon had formed a plan. A message of re-assurance was issued to the assembled chieftains and the panic stayed. Meanwhile a picked body of men had been sent out to see if they could discover Ras Hailu's guards on the roads east of Addis Ababa and capture them. This move was completely successful. On the next morning the expedition returned with several captives who when they saw that all was known soon made complete confession.

Armed now with full details of Ras Hailu's plans Haile Selassie moved with decision. He was soon in touch with Gussessay who, acting on his instructions, continued to appear friendly to Lidj Yassu, while sending the Emperor news of the pretender's whereabouts.

A party of trusted troops was sent to capture Lidj Yassu, but he scented danger and escaped into the forests. Ras Hailu, on the other hand, was taken by surprise and captured after comparatively little fighting. The rest of the revolt collapsed.

Once more Lidj Yassu was a fugitive. At last, desperate with fatigue, he sought sanctuary in a monastery. But he was told that the writ of excommunication issued nearly twenty years before still ran. He was a Moslem and had no right to claim the protection of the Church. The monks, however, did not denounce him, the abbot saying that he would not interfere in the quarrels of kings, so Yassu managed to double back on his tracks and reach Gussessay — of whose treachery he was unaware. From that moment his fate was sealed. His host placed him in a guarded hut and sent for the imperial forces. There was a brief struggle in which two or three men were killed, for Lidj Yassu still had a few faithful defenders. Then he was made prisoner once more.

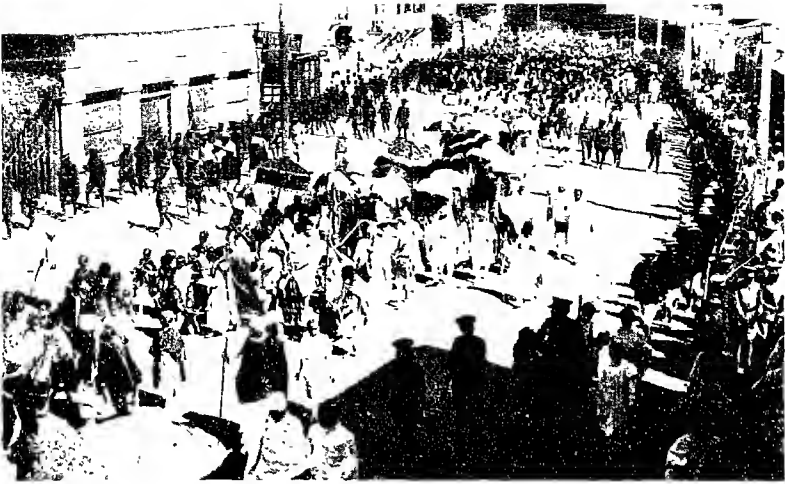
The trial of Ras Hailu was a moving spectacle. The

prisoner, an imposing figure in chains of gold, spoke defiantly of his wrongs. He was sentenced not to death but to life imprisonment and the confiscation of all his property. It is said that he was offered his liberty by the Emperor in exchange for the monies held on his behalf by banks in Europe. But he steadfastly refuses to part with his wealth, hoping always that his time will come.

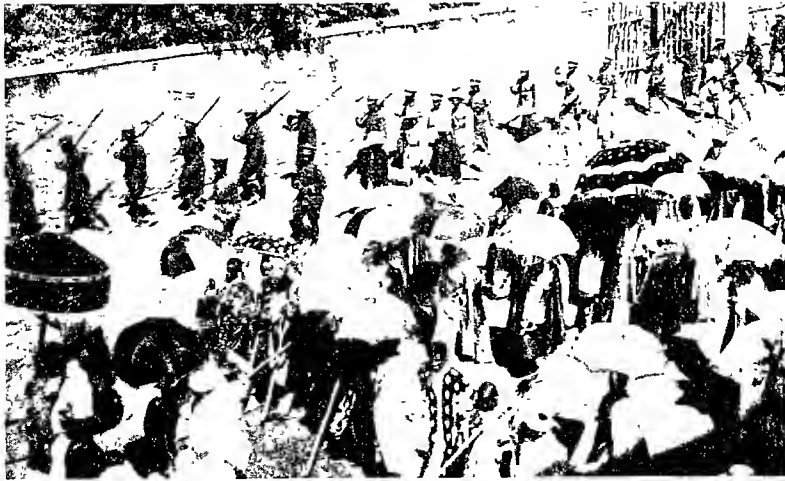
Lidj Yassu was not punished for his part in the affair beyond being sent back to conditions of captivity similar to those to which he had previously been subjected. It is interesting to note, however, that recently when the Italians commenced to advance, one of the first orders that the Emperor issued was for the removal of Lidj Yassu to an inaccessible part of the country. Haile Selassie feared quite naturally that should Yassu fall into the hands of the Italians they might use him for the rallying point for a Moslem revolt.

Ras Hailu is now imprisoned on one of the islands in Lake Zouai. His confinement, at first rigorous, has lately been made easier, but it seems likely that he will end his days in prison, for he plotted the death of the Emperor from whom he had received much kindness, and mercy is not likely to be shown.

The news of Lidj Yassu's death has now arrived in England accompanied by rumours of poison. The evidence is utterly vague, however, and there is no reason to suppose that this brilliant and likeable, but indolent and ill-starred prince met any but a natural end.



THE PROCESSION ON THE FEAST OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AT THE CEREMONY  
OF "THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS"



THE EMPEROR AND HIS SUITE BENEATH THEIR UMBRELLAS  
The guards are in European khaki, a rather sinister sight





THE EMPEROR VISITS A HOSPITAL

*Face page 269]*

## CHAPTER XXIV

### WAR

#### *Haile Selassie's Speech to his Soldiers.*

"It is better to die free than to live as slaves. Soldiers, follow the example of your warrior ancestors. Young and old, unite to fight the invader. Your sovereign will be among you. He will not hesitate to shed his blood if necessary for Ethiopia and her independence. For forty years Italy has cherished the desire to conquer Ethiopia. We were resolved to safeguard our honour, but we consider that a Government does not degrade itself by submitting to a ruling pronounced by an impartial and qualified international body. We therefore solemnly declared that Ethiopia would bow immediately and completely to any ruling against her if she were found at fault. Right up to the last moment we shall persist in our efforts for peace. If our repeated endeavours and goodwill fail, our conscience will be pure. God will defend the just cause of our country."

In the preceding chapters the stage has been slowly set for the last act. Either Ethiopia will emerge from the conflict a free and strong nation—or she will go under fighting, a long drawn out agony of guerilla warfare, with its records of ambush and capture, disease and starvation, to underline the irony of the term "Italian civilisation."

It was on November 24th, 1934, that a telephone call informed the Emperor that an "incident" had occurred at Ual-Ual in the direction of the Somaliland border. No blood had been shed, but an Italian outpost had behaved in most insulting fashion to a Border Commission composed of Ethiopian chiefs and British officers, who were examining the state of affairs along the frontier for the purpose of clearing up certain difficulties arising

from the movements of nomad tribes. Later in the day a message from the British representative at the capital enquired if the Emperor had any news of the trouble.

It was some time before the full account of what had happened was available. The facts were these.

The Commission had reached Ual-Ual on November 23rd, and had wished to make use of the wells. There were two British officers, several Ethiopian officials and an escort of about five hundred troops.

It must be emphasised that it was not the Italian frontier in which the Commission were interested. They did not realise until they saw the Italian flag flying on a defensive post ahead of the line of wells that they were near any territory which the Italians might consider theirs. Their work concerned the British Somaliland boundary to the north-east; and in any case the maps which the Commission were using showed Ual-Ual to be at least sixty miles within the boundary of Ethiopia.

The British Commissioners were astonished when the Italian Somali troops (about two hundred and fifty in number and under a native sergeant) showed themselves hostile; but the Abyssinians were in much greater strength and the Somalis at length retreated beyond the wells.

This is an important point since it shows that when they were in vastly superior strength the Ethiopian officers were able to restrain their men. Some days later, by which time the Italians had brought up aeroplanes and tanks, it is alleged that the Ethiopians deliberately attacked them—though they were now, if not outnumbered, obviously hopelessly outclassed. To return to the actual course of events. The Englishmen protested to the Italians against this interference; what followed is best seen in the account of the Commission.

- (10) 'In view of the urgent representations of the two Commissioners, Captain Cimmaruta was finally prevailed upon to draw up a letter acknowledging receipt of the protest of November 23rd, 1934. At the same time he proposed a

provisional arrangement, pending his Government's reply, to prevent any incident from occurring between the Abyssinian escort and his "banda." The two Commissioners replied that they were prepared, subject to the fullest reservations, to study his proposal on the spot with him. The Commission and Captain Cimmaruta proceeded there and then to the place where the Abyssinian escort and the "banda" were facing one another.

- (11) 'Although, in form, Captain Cimmaruta's proposal appeared to be sincere and opportune, it became perfectly clear to the Abyssinian Mission, during the investigation on the spot, that the de facto situation might create an undesirable precedent as regards Italian territorial claims. This was demonstrated by the uncompromising attitude of Captain Cimmaruta, who wished to indicate the position of the two opposing lines by marking tree trunks and affixing his signature. He invited the Abyssinian and British Commissioners to do the same. The two Commissioners considered Captain Cimmaruta's request inadmissible.
- (12) 'Captain Cimmaruta refused to comply with the Abyssinian Mission's request that the line of the Italian "banda" should be withdrawn a few metres so that the water of a well close at hand might be used for the Commission's requirements. He promised, however, that he would permit the Commission to draw as much water as it required from any well selected behind the line of his "banda." His permission would be given once and for all. This offer being calculated in the circumstances to wound the Abyssinian national pride, the Abyssinian Mission simply declined what, in Captain Cimmaruta's eyes, appeared to be an offer. In order, however, not to embitter the situation, the Mission proceeded with the examination of the Cimmaruta proposal in regard to the provisional separating-line.
- (13) 'The British Mission made every effort to arrive at an equitable solution, but was constantly thwarted by the unconciliatory and disobliging attitude of the Italian officer, which may be judged from his remarks, several times repeated; "Take it or leave it," "Just as you please," and by the threat that in case of refusal he would send for "several hundred soldiers" (not "banda").
- (14) 'Just at that moment, about 4 p.m., two Italian military aeroplanes, Nos. S.O.4 and S.O.7, appeared in the south and began to dive very low, first over the members of the Commission, who were busy at that moment with Captain

Cimmaruta, and then over the camps of the two Missions, where the national flags were flying, and over the camp of the Abyssinian escort. This operation was repeated several times. During its last series of dives, a member of the crew of aeroplane S.O.4 was seen training a machine-gun on the members of the Commission, their staff and their escort, who were with Captain Cimmaruta and in their respective camps. This was observed in particular by Fitaurari Tessama, Lidj Zaude, Fitaurari Shiffera, Fitaurari Alemayehu, Ato Mersie-Hazen, among the Abyssinians, and by Mr. Curle, Captain Taylor, Lieutenant Collingwood and Corporal Griffiths among the British.

- (15) 'The British Commissioner thereupon expressed to Captain Cimmaruta his great indignation at this provocative demonstration and announced that in order not to complicate the situation for the Abyssinian Government, the British Mission would retire to Ado as soon as possible. The Abyssinian Mission also expressed its intense indignation, pointing out that such a procedure on the part of the agents of a Government with which Abyssinia had concluded a Treaty of Friendship did not appear to be in keeping with international usage.'

The reason for the British officers and their party retiring had best be explained in full, since it has often been questioned, for it is not the tradition of the British to retire in the face of possible trouble. The fact was that Captain Taylor, Mr. Curle and their companions thought that the Italian Commander might be suffering from an attack of nerves and could not credit that his attitude was part of definite official intention to force a quarrel. The tropics produce strange effects in white men and it is said that the British believed that this explained the whole affair, though the action of the aeroplane pilots showed more than normal Italian irresponsibility.

Were British casualties to result under such circumstances a comparatively unimportant error of judgment on the part of an overwrought officer might be magnified into an international imbroglio to which there was no seeing the end. Besides, the Commissioners were the guests of the Ethiopians, and it was the duty of the latter

as hosts to see that their guests were not insulted. Rather than embarrass the Ethiopians by remaining in so awkward a situation the British showed their good sense by getting out of the way. The Abyssinian forces did not retreat because to have done so might have enraged the local population who, on seeing the forces sent to protect them apparently abandoning the task, would probably have taken matters into their own hands. Any subsequent fighting might easily have imperilled the safety of the Commission.

This was unofficially explained to the Emperor who perfectly appreciated the correctness of the British Commissioner's conduct. But before this was done news came that fighting had begun.

The Italians had the best of it. Their casualties were thirty killed and twice that number wounded. The Abyssinians had one hundred and seven dead and forty-five wounded. The figures are instructive—an Italian hit meant a death twice in three times. Abyssinian hits killed only once in three.

As to the responsibility for the firing of the first shot there can rarely have been a case in which the accounts of the disputants were more directly at variance. The Italians say that the Abyssinians paraded along the line of the native Somali troops shouting insults and "executing provocative fantasias," and that early on December 5th they attacked the Italian pickets. The report which reached the Emperor said that the Somalis ambushed a party of Ethiopians sent for water. This accords well with the scene of the disturbance and the observed habits of the Somalis.

Needless to say the Ethiopians were completely overwhelmed by the modern equipment of the Italian troops; but they did not retreat in disorder, some detachments showing amazing nonchalance under withering fire. The enemy then bombed the line of retreat, and three days later, when all possible danger to the invader was passed, bombed the defenceless town of Ado which the British

Commission had only just quitted and where their baggage still remained. And three weeks later, by way of demonstration, there was a further and utterly unprovoked air raid upon Gerlogubi.

The Emperor consulted with his ministers on receipt of the news and wrote to the Italian Government on December 6th, *asking for arbitration* as provided for by the 1928 treaty of friendship between the two nations. Nothing could have been more correct and objective than the Emperor's attitude. The Italians, however, refused to receive the Ethiopian envoy and replied in the following terms:

1. "The incident of December 5th occurred in such clear and manifest circumstances that there can be no doubt of its nature; viz, that it consisted of a sudden and unprovoked attack by Abyssinians on an Italian outpost.
2. "The Abyssinian Government asks that the case be submitted to arbitral procedure. The Italian Government does not see what question could be submitted to this procedure.
3. "Accordingly, the Italian Government must insist that the reparations and apologies due to it as a consequence of these events be made as soon as possible."

"It is 1914 over again," said an Ethiopian merchant to a British resident, "and we are Serbia."

At this stage, however, the rest of the world cared nothing about an obscure frontier incident in a remote part of Africa, the general impression in diplomatic circles in Europe being that Signor Mussolini was, as usual, acting the part of the "strong man," and that provided he were allowed to occupy the stage in that rôle, he would not, as one official remarked, "throw any coconuts at the audience."

But those in touch with the situation at the British Foreign Office noted two things. First, that the clash at Ual-Ual had been premeditated on the part of the Italians, since more than two years previously the commander of the troops in that region had, in a letter to the British Administration, implied a claim to the disputed wells.

(The British, extremely puzzled by this apparently quite irresponsible implication, refused to reply.) Secondly, the Italians were moving troops both in Somaliland and Italy in a manner quite out of proportion to the apparent issues involved.

The Emperor of Ethiopia was approached and urged to exercise the greatest possible restraint over his forces. To show good faith he ordered all frontier patrols to withdraw.

Late in December, however, there was brought to the attention of the Emperor an article in the Italian periodical *Forze Armate* which seriously alarmed him. Knowing that the whole press of Italy was under such strict control that this article could hardly have appeared without official sanction, both Haile Selassie and his immediate advisers were troubled to find that it outlined a claim so fantastic that were it to be maintained there was no possibility of avoiding conflict.

In the treaty of 1908 the Italian Somaliland boundary is discussed as follows:

"From the Webi Schebeli the frontier proceeds north-east following the line agreed on in 1897. All the territory belonging to the tribes towards the coast shall remain dependent on Italy; all the territory of Ogaden and all that of the tribes towards Ogaden shall remain Abyssinian."

(The Webi Schebeli is the principal river of that district. It does not reach the sea, but the Italians think it might be made the basis of extensive irrigation.)

Now, as has been shown, the tribes involved move at certain seasons, and therefore, some two or three years after the signing of the treaty, the Italians sent General Citerni to clear the matter up. It was almost precisely the same problem as that which Rennell Rodd had dealt with so efficiently, but the Italians never managed to straighten things out.

The article in *Forze Armate* stated that the Ethiopians had proved so "intolerant, hostile and insulting" that the Italian mission had been compelled to withdraw. The report of Ethiopians concerned was to the effect



that when they refused to allow frontier landmarks to be erected quite arbitrarily General Citerni broke off negotiations.

The article (which was published in two parts) continued that in the case of nomad tribes normally under Italian protection, the treaty conveyed jurisdiction to Italy *wherever these tribes moved*. This was called "frontier delimitation based on ethnic criteria," and was an entirely novel proposition in international relations. But there was worse to follow—for finally, as if aware of the unsatisfactory nature of the arguments already advanced the journal played one last card, a trump of the most peculiar kind.

In 1885 the Sultan of Obbia concluded a treaty with the German East Africa Company by which rights were given extending over an area "twenty-five days' march inland." When in 1889 by a series of treaties with the various Somali Sultans, Menelek, Britain and the Sultan of Zanzibar, Italy was given her sphere of influence (which she confirmed in 1905 by purchasing the Benadir ports for £144,000 from the Sultan of Zanzibar)—these rights granted in 1885 became, so *Forze Armate* argued, vested in Italy forthwith. That Italy could claim a hinterland frontier at twenty-five days' march inland on the strength of a trading agreement with a Sultan of Obbia was perhaps the most fantastic claim that any country has ever made in territorial matters. It might well have been held to bring half Ethiopia under Italian rule. The Sultan was selling something he had no right to sell—unless he considered a day's march to be in the neighbourhood of seven or eight miles: and even then his jurisdiction was extremely doubtful.

This article, so hopelessly wrongheaded, so wilful in its defiance of common-sense, produced a profound impression on the Emperor. From that moment, while determined to permit not the slightest act of provocation on the part of his men, he was convinced that he would shortly be compelled to fight for the independence of his country.

There were several points of view in the Emperor's Council. One was that an immediate attack before the Italians could bring up reinforcements was the best course. From a military point of view this was allowable. The Italian attitude, and the constant reinforcement of the Somaliland troops, together with the construction of military roads, pointed to definitely hostile intentions and constituted acts of war.

Nor would an attack have been a breach of the League Covenant, for the Italians were clearly the aggressors in that they had refused arbitration. But it had been plain to all the signatories of the Covenant that the question of what constituted aggression was the one weak point in the scheme and would inevitably lead to all sorts of subtle distinctions and evasions. When, as in the present situation, the borderline between two nations was not strictly delimited, there was obviously splendid scope for special pleading. The policy of attack, which the Emperor never for one moment considered, belonged to another age. The Emperor determined to rely on the League of Nations.

He would have appealed at once, but it was suggested to him through diplomatic channels that the effect of this might be to magnify the importance of what, after all, might prove a very easily arbitrated dispute. He therefore adopted the middle course, exercising his right under Art. 11, Section 2 of the Covenant, which reads:

"It is also declared to be the friendly right of each member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations on which peace depends."

*(Italy had already committed a breach of the Covenant by refusing arbitration of a dispute which is made compulsory upon all League members by Art. 12 of the Covenant.)*

On December 14th the Emperor notified Geneva by telegraph just as the Council was about to meet, that a dangerous situation had arisen with Italy, concluding the message: "In the presence of Italian aggression the Abyssinian Government draws the Council's attention to the gravity of the situation."

Now the League was faced with a challenge. At once the subtle diplomats began a series of moves by which they hoped to prevent any action. The Emperor, realising that if he were to rely implicitly upon the League, he must at once test its quality, decided on January 3rd, 1935, after Italy had persistently refused any sort of arbitration, to make a definite appeal.

That same day Monsieur Laval left for Rome, following which, on January 19th, it was announced from Geneva that since both of the Governments concerned in the dispute had agreed to negotiate in the spirit and under the terms of the 1928 Treaty of Friendship between them, the appeal of Ethiopia to the League would be postponed until the following session in May.

Now it is important that Europeans understand how this situation appears to Ethiopia. The average educated inhabitant of Addis Ababa is a keen student of European news and draws very acute conclusions from what he reads. To him the facts appear in this light:

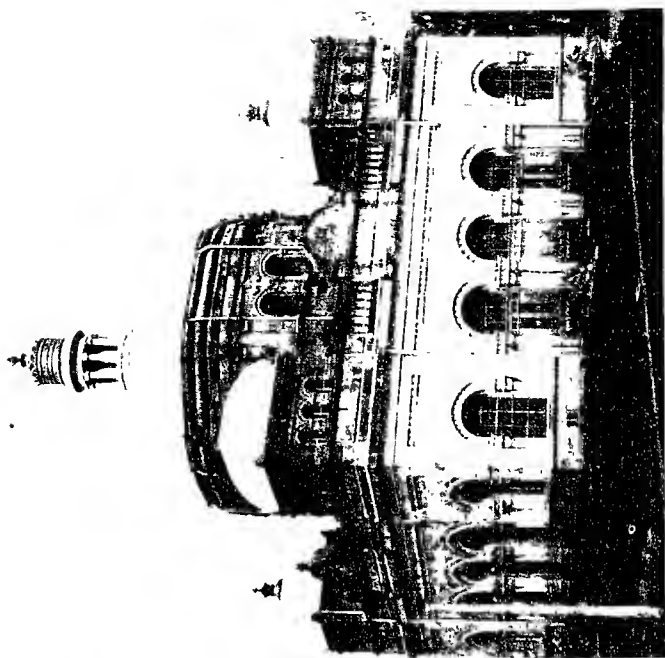
First Italy refuses to submit her claims to arbitration. She has therefore broken the Covenant and Ethiopia appeals to the League.

The Prime Minister of France consults hurriedly with the Duce of Italy.

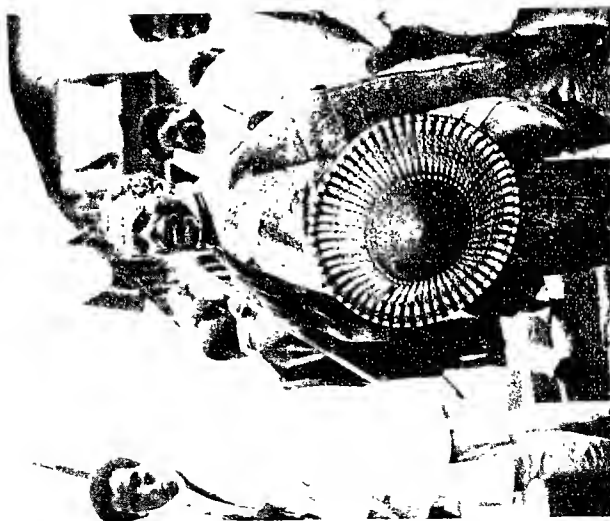
Italy is reported by the League of Nations to be willing to negotiate.

On the strength of this statement the League postpones consideration of Ethiopia's appeal.

Meanwhile, the Paris newspapers are full of articles urging Italy on to a war of conquest in the name of civilisation, and it soon appears that Italy is absolutely



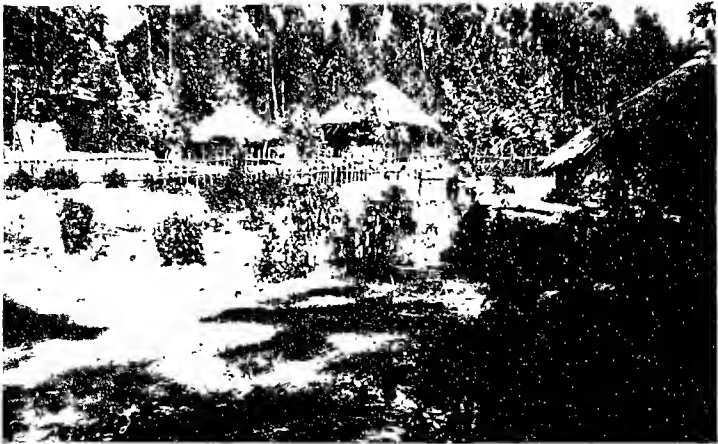
THE TOMB OF MENELEK



RAS KASSA—A TRUSTED CHIEF  
(see page 262)



THE SLAUGHTERED OX



CENTRE OF ADDIS ABABA

Showing prolific growth of Eucalyptus trees imported by Menelek

*Face page 279]*

unwilling to agree to arbitration on any terms which Ethiopia could possibly accept. . . . The mobilisation of Italian forces continues steadily. From this sequence of events the Emperor drew one definite conclusion.

"Once again we are dealing with treachery," he told his Council. "There is a bargain between France and Italy. The promise which the Italians have made to arbitrate concerning the trouble at Ual-Ual is not sincere. They are wasting time deliberately because their forces are not yet ready for an advance. The rains will soon begin. During the whole of the rainy season our enemies will prepare. In the October of this year the attack will come."

This astonishingly acute analysis was borne out in every detail. Looking back on the series of events which led up to the attack on Adowa, which was hailed as so great a victory by the Italians, the student can see that this was merely the final move in a well-thought-out programme to which Mussolini adhered without once wavering, keeping up a pretence of negotiation in the meantime to quiet British opinion and to provide the League with an excuse for continued inactivity.

But to return to the events of January, 1935. On the 20th of that month there came serious news. A party of Abyssinian raiders on the edge of French Somaliland came into contact with a French patrol which was wiped out completely, the casualties including a French officer of a colonial regiment.

The Emperor was aghast when the report was placed before him; he was also puzzled. Having carefully scrutinised such details as were available he called for his Minister of War (a very capable man) and went into the matter with all the quiet thoroughness of his character.

"We must find out what the raiders were doing," he said. "That frontier is quiet at most times. It is strange that this raid should come just at that very moment when we wished above all things that no such trouble

should occur. Send out reliable men to enquire what is behind this. It is not a matter of slaves or ivory. We may find that spies are among the border tribes stirring them up."

Rough justice was inflicted upon the raiders. Three minor chieftains, believed to have fostered the trouble though they had not taken part in it, were seized and questioned. Two of them were found to have Italian money hidden in their huts.

Now there was a chance that this money might have been the result of honest trading, but in view of all the circumstances that seemed highly unlikely. The Emperor did not make any wild charges but he set in motion a vast "comb out" of the frontier areas. Of just how much Italian money was found there is no record. But the results of the enquiry were appalling to the Emperor and his advisers. Secret orders were issued that spying must be met by counter-spying and that the traffic of corruption must be stopped.

It is hard to recapture for the English public the feelings with which the inner circle of advisers waited in Addis Ababa for each day's news. At this time the dispute was still presented as a minor affair in the English newspapers. No one in London really expected war. Permanent officials one and all expressed the opinion that it would all blow over. But at the centre of the storm sat the Emperor, each day's reports before him, and he could see better than any other observer that the enemies of his country were slowly hemming her in.

Already Mussolini was talking of Italian East Africa—a name which had not hitherto appeared upon any map. Marshal de Bono, whose utterances concerning Ethiopia had been for many years persistently hostile and militarist, was appointed Governor-General of this newly conceived area. The Duce himself became Minister for the Colonies and there were huge increases in the appropriations for Colonial administration.

Ethiopian observers stationed on the Suez Canal watched the steady influx of Italian troopships. There could, fortunately, be no concealment, for since the dues charged by the Canal Company depend on the number of passengers as well as the tonnage of the vessels which pass through, there were official figures in existence showing to the last man how many Italian soldiers had been sent to the Red Sea ports.

Even in the last months of 1934 there had been a persistent trickle of Italian troops through the Canal, but now the numbers were increasing to such an extent that it was clear to everyone that this was more than the mere reinforcement of border patrols.

Few people realise in Great Britain how the actions of their country's rulers have appeared from the Ethiopian point of view. This is perhaps inevitable; it is, however, most unfortunate since did the mass of English people realise how weakly and in some ways discredibly the situation was met by British diplomacy they would probably express their views concerning those responsible with a force and candour highly disturbing to the calm of high office. The first shock to the Emperor came when he learned that Great Britain had given a lead to Europe by stating that in the interests of peace she was prohibiting the export of arms to either of the disputants.

In view of the fact that it was known that Italy was amply supplied while Abyssinia was utterly without means of manufacturing armaments of any sort whatever in the modern sense of the word, the pretence that the prohibition was impartial must be classed as one of the most grotesque pieces of humbug of which civilised diplomacy has ever been guilty. The Emperor was bitterly indignant when he learned of this decision.

Certain of his advisers who claimed to be in close touch with British government circles and to know the mentality of the British nation attempted to cheer their ruler, however. Their argument in brief was this: Great Britain can be trusted. You can rely on justice from her. It may



be a long while coming but it is very certain in the end. She has now denied you arms, admittedly a strange way of showing sympathy to a small and comparatively defenceless nation confronted by a powerful and militarised aggressor; but do not despair—the British mind always works strangely in matters such as these. She is denying you supplies of arms to defend yourself, but by that very action according to her standards of honour, she binds herself to defend you. This prohibition of which you are complaining is the very best thing that could have happened. If Britain is forbidding you arms it is because she intends to forbid the war. And this she could do single-handed.

This was an attractive hope, but it was somewhat damped by the tactics by which Mr. Anthony Eden tried to arrange for the peaceful settlement of the quarrel. Ethiopia, according to his suggestion, was to cede to Italy, for the purpose of satisfying Italian honour, a comparatively unimportant tract of territory, and in return for this sweet reasonableness was to receive from Great Britain a corridor leading to the sea at the port of Zeila not far south of Jibuti but in British Somaliland.

This proposition was considered in some quarters to be a skilful solution. Actually it was one of the most glorious howlers of which the nice-mannered young traveller in international soporifics has ever been guilty. Mussolini, perceiving that Great Britain hankered after compromise, stiffened his attitude. Haile Selassie replied that while he would be grateful for access to the sea he saw no reason why he should cede one foot of land to an aggressor nation when the League of Nations guaranteed the territorial integrity of its members. But this was not all. There was a howl of rage from the French who saw in the proposal an attempt, whether deliberate or inadvertent, to ruin the port of Jibuti by opening a competing port close by. The French are always a little sensitive about Jibuti, a terrible town indeed, of which it is universally stated by travellers that they have managed

to make the worst. It is always referred to by those who have sojourned there as the 'world's worst port.'

In England, too, there was an exhibition of rage. Retired colonels gnashed their teeth in public at the thought of abandoning one single Somali tribesman now enjoying British care to the barbarous Abyssinians—though everyone with the least knowledge of that part of the world was aware that these tribes roamed at will into all the adjoining territories and would be completely indifferent to any changes of boundary which could not to any appreciable extent affect their lives.

A French diplomat expressed the view to the present writer that in no country but Great Britain could a Cabinet Minister have survived a blunder so egregious. He would have been hounded from office, and overwhelmed with ridicule. "But," he added, "in Great Britain, though he has made everyone furious, he has probably increased his reputation. Which since I like him immensely suits me very well."

The next incident in which the British Press and also the Government behaved very queerly from the Ethiopian point of view was in their comments on the announcement by the *Daily Telegraph* early in September, 1935, that a mysterious Mr. Rickett had been granted a large concession to prospect for oil in Abyssinia. The Emperor was solemnly lectured as to his unethical conduct in granting such a concession at a time of international tension, as though it were tacitly agreed in Europe that as his property was already divided in secret agreements between the great powers it was a breach of good taste or even worse on his part to dispose of any rights himself. That is the sort of attitude which infuriates the educated Abyssinian—the tacit assumption that Ethiopia is not a free agent in the same sense as other nations and must only act after receiving advice. As the Emperor was quick to state he had the perfect right in the interests of his country to make concessions to any responsible applicant.

It is useless to recapitulate all the diplomatic shifts of the rainy season which was now drawing to a close. They can all be summed up as consisting of frantic efforts by Britain and France to bribe, cajole, or as a last resort, bully Italy into giving up her plans for war. Mussolini goes straight ahead with his military preparations showing only just sufficient interest in the various suggestions of the other European Powers to keep up the pretence of negotiation, which suits him well enough, since he is playing for time.

Ethiopia does not enter into the picture at all except to make an occasional protest of which no notice is taken. Then, as soon as the rains show signs of ceasing, Mussolini begins movements of troops which leave no possible shadow of doubt as to his intentions. Determined to leave no chance for any fresh 'incident' to give Mussolini the opportunity of claiming that Abyssinia had committed an act of aggression and thus fogging the issue, Haile Selassie ordered all his patrols to withdraw from the frontiers. This astute move embarrassed Mussolini not at all. He had got past the point of needing excuses. On October 2nd, coinciding with the mobilisation of millions of civilians throughout Italy, the Italian troops crossed the border of Ethiopia. Only now did the Emperor order mobilisation, and even as he did so came news of the first fighting near Adowa.

The steps by which the dispute had slowly blossomed into a disgraceful war can best be appreciated in the form of a summary. Comment is superfluous.

#### THE PROGRESS OF THE DISPUTE

*Nov. 23rd, 1934.*—"Incident at Ual-Ual." Anglo-Abyssinian Boundary Commission conflict at Ual-Ual.

*Dec. 5th, 1934.*—Fighting at Ual-Ual between Abyssinian and Italian soldiery.

*Dec. 6th.*—Abyssinia and Italy both protest.

*Dec. 14th.*—Abyssinia telegraphs the League informing of the gravity of the situation.

- Jan. 3rd, 1935.*—Abyssinia makes her first appeal to the League, quoting Article 11 of the Covenant.
- Jan. 29th and Feb. 2nd.*—Further fighting between Italian and Abyssinian forces reported from Aftub, near Ual-Ual.
- Feb. 17th.*—First Italian troops embark for Eritrea.
- Mar. 4th.*—A neutral area is declared around Ual-Ual.
- Mar. 19th.*—Abyssinia again appeals to the League, this time under Articles 10 and 15.
- Apr. 15th.*—Abyssinia withdraws her appeal to await arbitration.
- May 20th and 25th.*—League Council considers appeal, and agreement on Conciliation Commission is reached.
- June 25th.*—Mussolini turns down Mr. Anthony Eden's suggested territorial exchanges, usually known as the "Zeila" offer. Conciliation Commission sits for first time.
- July 9th.*—Conciliation Commission disagree on terms of reference and postpone further negotiations indefinitely.
- July 31st and Aug. 3rd.*—Meeting of League Council. Conciliation Commission in conjunction with fifth arbitrator to report settlement before Sept. 1st.
- Aug. 16th and 18th.*—Conversations in Paris between Italy, France and England.
- Aug. 22nd.*—British Cabinet hold hurried consultation.
- Aug. 28th.*—Italian Cabinet meet at Bolzano.
- Sept. 3rd.*—Conciliation Commission, sitting with fifth member, exonerates both sides of blame for incidents at Ual-Ual.
- Sept. 4th.*—Italy officially notifies the League of her complaints.
- Sept. 6th.*—A committee of the Five Powers is established.
- Sept. 11th.*—British Foreign Minister addresses the League.
- Sept. 17th.*—Italy declares for "No compromise."
- Sept. 18th.*—The Five-Power Committee makes its first report.
- Sept. 20th.*—Abyssinia accepts the recommendations of the Five-Power Committee.
- Sept. 21st.*—Italy rejects all their proposals.
- Sept. 23rd.*—British Foreign minister in a communication to Mussolini denies British hostility to Italy.
- Sept. 25th.*—A full report of the findings of the Five-Power Committee is issued.
- Sept. 26th.*—League Council decides to stand by Article 15 of Covenant. A special committee of thirteen is appointed.
- Sept. 28th.*—Italian official communique denies any attacks on British interests.
- Oct. 2nd.*—Civilians are temporarily mobilised throughout Italy. 50,000 Italian troops march into Abyssinian territory.
- Oct. 3rd.*—The Emperor orders Abyssinia to mobilise. Fighting breaks out in the Adowa region.

## CHAPTER XXV

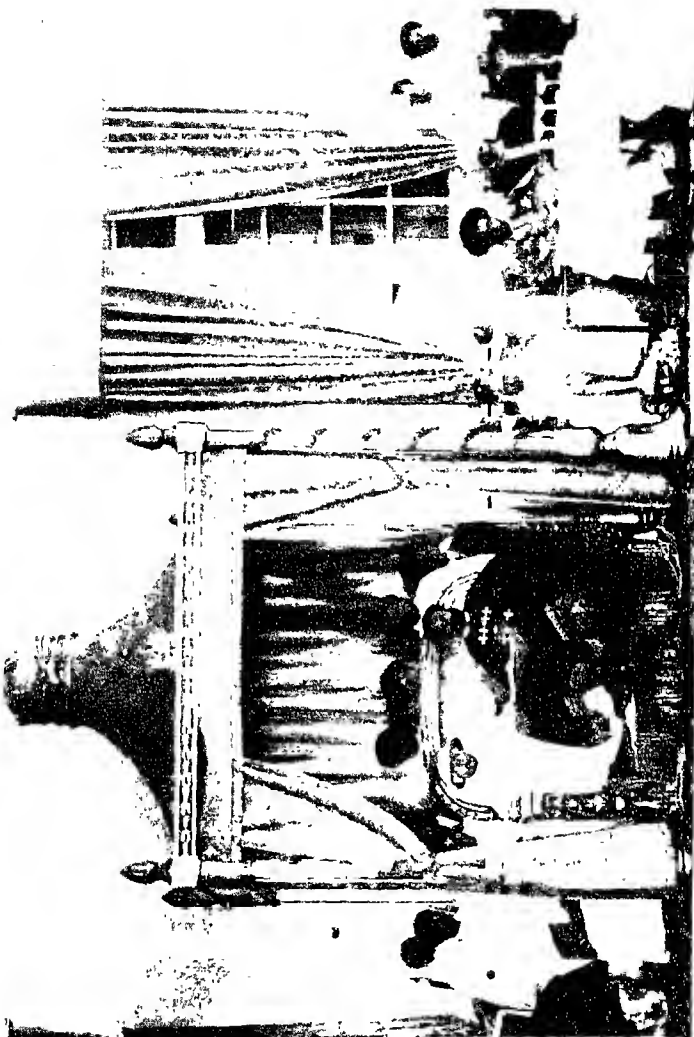
### THE TREACHERY OF HAILE SELASSIE GUGSA

THE first reports that one of the Tigre chieftains had gone over to the Italians were hailed in Rome as the beginning of the break up of the Ethiopian Empire. The renegade chief, Haile Selassie Gugsä, not only held the rank of Dejesmatch, equivalent in so far as comparisons are possible with the European rank of General, but he was the son-in-law of the Emperor and therefore presumably a figure of the first importance.

Later it came to be recognised that the military significance of the defection was comparatively slight. The number of men said to have deserted with their chief dwindled even in the Italian versions to the neighbourhood of one thousand, while it was estimated on the Ethiopian side as roughly two hundred. European opinion was, however, that the treachery, which was clearly pre-arranged, probably represented the beginning of an attempt on the part of the Italians to push the claims of a rival dynasty and eventually to set up a puppet Emperor on the model of Manchukuo.

For Haile Selassie Gugsä has a claim of sorts to the throne. Through his father\* Ras Gugsä Araia he is descended from the Emperor John, whose successors, after the Emperor's death in battle against the Dervishes in 1889, were dispossessed of the throne by Menelek.

The complex history of Ethiopia appears at first sight to bear no resemblance to anything with which the English reader is familiar, but a little reflection shows that interesting parallels can be found in the dynastic wars of Great Britain. The state of affairs in Shoa and Tigre during the greater part of the past century has



THE EMPEROR AND EMPRESS AT THE WEDDING OF THEIR DAUGHTER TO RAS GUGSA—  
AFTERWARDS THE TRAITOR. HE IS SEEN ON THE RIGHT WITH HIS BRIDE



THE TRAGIC BRIDE OF RAS GUGSA  
*The Princess Zemebe Werk*

been compared to the relationship of England and Scotland during Elizabeth's reign and later. France supported the Stuarts against England in much the same way as Italy at various times has supported the rulers of Tigre against the Shoan regime.

The same methods, too, have been tried for the ending of the quarrel. Menelek, as we have seen, tried to put a stop to the continual trouble by marrying his daughter Zawditu (afterwards co-ruler with the present Emperor) to the son of the Emperor John. All might have been well and a strong dynasty have been established with claims on the loyalty of both parties had not Zawditu's husband died before the Emperor Menelek. This, however, made the marriage alliance useless and the strife continued.

After Zawditu's death Haile Selassie found himself with the same problem that had exercised the mind of Menelek—how to keep peace with the people of Tigre. He had shown sound judgment in his handling of the position, mingling just dealing with shrewd diplomacy.

The two claimants to the governorship of the Tigre were the cousins, Ras Seyoum and Ras Gugsa Araia. Both were in addition possible claimants to the Imperial throne. From this fact a deadly personal rivalry has sprung, which Haile Selassie at once realised was a great safeguard to him. He therefore appointed the two cousins each governor of one half of the province of Tigre, Ras Seyoum being given control of the western half while Ras Gugsa Araia took the east. Subsequently, to strengthen his loyalty to the Imperial family, the Emperor arranged a marriage alliance, his eldest son, the Crown Prince, being wedded to the daughter of Ras Seyoum. Some years later, as evidence of a policy of complete equality between the two chiefs, the Emperor's second daughter was given in marriage to the son of Ras Gugsa, Haile Selassie Gugsa, whose recent treachery has shocked all loyal Ethiopians.

This desertion is the climax to a long feud and it is impossible in the space at our disposal to disentangle all



the queer ramifications of the various quarrels. It must suffice to say that they are far more complex than most European observers realise. Ras Seyoum and Ras Gugsä Aräia (whose death occurred some years ago) were never reconciled and their bickerings were a source of great anxiety to the Emperor Haile Selassie. While he was anxious that they should not combine against him and to that extent was glad of their rivalry it was a great hindrance to his plans for reform that the two governors would never co-operate. Thus at length with the hope of producing in them a better state of mind he commanded them both to appear before him. It is an effective comment on the state of Abyssinian communications at that time that the two rival chieftains decided to travel to Addis Ababa, first by ship to Jibuti from an Eritrean port and thence by rail. Neither ships nor trains were frequent, and thus it came about that the two bitter enemies were compelled to travel together. Since each had a considerable following of vassal chieftains and servants both male and female there was every possible chance of continuous friction en route. Each had a personal bodyguard of at least one hundred armed warriors, and few who knew the tempers of the men concerned would have guessed it possible that the expeditions would reach the capital without bloodshed.

The Italians, however, were equally embarrassed by the quarrel, for it was quite clear to the authorities at Asmara that the refusal of the two chiefs to act together in any way would be a great hindrance in the penetration, either peaceful or military, of the provinces on the Eritrean border. If one of the chiefs were to be won over by the Italians, for instance, that would be sufficient to make the other their implacable enemy. It was therefore good policy on the part of the Italian governor at the port of embarkation to attempt a reconciliation between the two men.

When the Italian Governor-General issued an invitation to lunch to the two parties there was an immediate howl

of protest. Neither chief would consent for one moment to sit at meat with the other and their followers were loud in denunciation of what both sides deemed an insult. But the lure of European luxury was strong. Both men were curious as to what the feast would be like, and little by little they were persuaded. It was exacted that there should be absolute equality in every detail in the treatment of the warring guests, and at one stage in the negotiations there was nearly a complete deadlock owing to the fact that one of them had been lent a slightly newer motor-car than the other; but deft and tactful methods prevailed, so that eventually the lunch was held.

Those who witnessed the affair frequently related the story. From the start the ice was indeed thin. Both the guests of honour glared moodily at each other, eager to seize on any disparity of courtesy as an excuse for an open row. Their host was expecting every moment for the storm to break, the silence of the chieftains growing steadily more ominous. It was not till the champagne began to flow that any signs of relenting could be noticed. But the perseverance of the Governor-General at length met with its reward and before the function was ended he had persuaded the two rivals to shake hands with every appearance of cordiality.

This lasted until the capital was reached, and though in the subsequent ceremonies there were moments of extreme tension and one or two brawls broke out among the warriors, the two governors of Tigre kept the peace during their visit to the Emperor and departed to their provinces apparently reconciled to a degree far exceeding the most sanguine expectations of their ruler.

It cannot be imagined, however, that at heart Haile Selassie had any real hopes of peace between the two factions. He knew that the feud went deeper than any surface cordiality could penetrate and that many generations had contributed to what appeared at first sight to be more or less a personal quarrel. He himself, for all his efforts to remain outside the dispute, was in reality

deeply involved. Not only was there the division between the descendants of the Emperor John and the great Menelek; there were also the divisions which had grown up within the State during the time of his regency as joint ruler with Zawditu. In those days when the Emperor Haile Selassie had stood for progress and justice against the more conservative outlook of the Empress Zawditu the various chieftains had ranged themselves either on the side of the Empress or on that of the Regent. This had been inevitable, but the resulting intrigues had wasted much valuable time and had been a constant threat to the peace of Ethiopia. Naturally Ras Seyoum and Ras Gugsä Araia were always members of opposing factions, but their loyalties had several times shifted as the result of palace manœuvres. If one of them received any mark of friendship from either Empress or Regent the other immediately made overtures to the opposition. Thus it was never possible to be certain on which side either of the chiefs was to be found, while the presence of Italy in the background added yet another imponderable, to what was already an impossibly tangled, problem.

It is his conduct under such conditions as these that must win for the Emperor the definite admiration of the impartial student. He never broke faith with either of the rivals or allowed one to grow strong at the expense of the other. Yet in all the intrigues which surrounded him he always managed to think one move ahead of his opponents. It was chess on a truly chequered board, and the Emperor showed himself a superb player, never violating the rules of the strange game.

The Empress has been said by some observers to have exerted a great influence for good over the rivals. Her appeal to them was always based on religious grounds. Particularly was this so when in 1929 Ras Gugsä Olie, ruler of Central Amhara, raised the standard of revolt against the Emperor. The details of this rebellion and the strange issues involved are too complex to explain here. It was, queerly enough, because of Haile Selassie's

supposed friendship with the Italians (as shown by the treaty of 1928) that the chiefs rebelled, though the treaty came only as a climax to a long series of grievances felt by those chiefs to whom modern ideas concerning the administration of justice appeared as nothing more than the whittling away of their age-old rights over their subjects. The great seriousness of the alliance against the Emperor Haile Selassie lay in the fact that Ras Gugsa Olie (as has been related elsewhere) was a former husband of the Empress and thus was imbued (though quite irrationally) with a sense of bitter personal wrong. Things might well have gone hardly with the Emperor whose hatred of war (one of the guiding principles of his whole life) led him to offer every possible concession to the rebels and to give them every chance to submit without humiliation. These tactics were naturally enough interpreted as signs of weakness by the rebels whose intelligence worked at a much lower level than their Emperor's—who, when at last he realised how his policy was misinterpreted, decided on strong measures.

The whole of the Imperial Army was mobilised with great speed and placed under Ras Muhulghetta, a very able commander, who is now in the field against the Italians. A careful plan of campaign was drawn up, by following which it was hoped to divide the opposing forces and defeat them in detail. Ras Seyoum and Ras Gugsa Araia were invited to co-operate, but moved very tardily in response to this request. The exhortations of the Empress were effective, however, and they were eventually induced to begin a campaign. Each was inclined to watch the other rather than the enemy, but when it appeared that there was a chance of plunder they sank their differences and raided more or less in harmony. They succeeded in capturing a good many head of cattle and other booty, but it is doubtful whether their operations contributed much to the success of the Emperor's tactics, which was nevertheless astonishing in its completeness.

A chief named Deggiac Aileu was prominent in the campaign, serving his Emperor with loyalty and with great military skill. Ras Olie was out-generalled and at last was killed together with most of his followers. When the war was over the Emperor was careful to express gratitude to all who had aided him and was specially generous in his praise of the two governors of Tigre, although he can have harboured few illusions concerning the part which they had played.

From that time Ras Seyoum has gradually come round to the side of the Emperor, his quick intelligence, for he is undoubtedly a man of superior capacity, telling him that the introduction of progressive ideas into Ethiopia can hardly be resisted and is, in fact, that nation's only hope of preserving its independence. He has proved his loyalty on several occasions and much is hoped of him in the present struggle.

Ras Gugsä Araia, on the other hand, was in the last years of his life a truculent and unreliable chief, a constant thorn in the Emperor's side. Evidence that he had secretly promised help to Ras Olie was discovered during the clearing up of the latter's affairs, and this, together with the memory of his unsatisfactory conduct in divorcing his wife, a favourite niece of the Emperor, made amicable relations between them practically impossible. Nevertheless the Emperor did not allow his dislike of the father to prevent him from acting generously towards the son, and when Haile Selassie Gugsä inherited the family lands everything was done to show him that none of his father's shortcomings would be visited upon his head and that he had only to deal justly to receive warm friendship in return.

There were some grounds for the Emperor's hopes that better things would result with Haile Selassie Gugsä in his father's shoes. The young chief was handsome, apparently intelligent, and had no obvious vices. The Emperor gave his second daughter in marriage to the new chief in the hope that this would bind him to the

imperial house and also with the thought that the splendid training which the princess had received might be a good influence upon her husband.

From the first it was plain that all did not go well with the marriage. The princess, used to the spotless cleanliness and simple luxury of the palace at Addis Ababa, found herself very unhappy in the much less pleasant surroundings at Makale. Even had she been married to an attentive and loving husband her lot would still have been a hard one; but Haile Selassie Gugsa soon showed himself cruel and neglectful towards her. Perhaps it was that the old feuds still stirred in his savage blood; it may perhaps be nearer the truth to conjecture that it was the knowledge of his young wife's superior character and education which was a constant irritation to his vanity and prompted his ill usage of her. She was a beautiful, rather delicate girl with the sweetest and most submissive of dispositions, sharing many of her father's tastes and deeply attached to him. She knew that her happiness had been sacrificed for political reasons and was prepared to do her duty in the strange surroundings to which fate had transplanted her.

But her husband was moved neither by her beauty nor by her gentleness. A European trader who visited Tigre reported to the Emperor that his daughter appeared unhappy and far from well, and that even her husband's servants were disgusted by his conduct towards her; that her house was little more than a hut, ill kept, smoky and with a roof in need of repair; that she was denied not only the comforts but even, sometimes, the necessities of life.

This was terrible news for the Emperor, who loved his daughter dearly; but much as he would have liked to have brought her home his hands were tied. He could not afford to stir up trouble with a possible ally while confronted with a situation which grew more and more menacing from day to day. He sent his daughter gifts, and made arrangements by which he might have more

frequent news of her, at the same time conveying to Haile Selassie Gugsä in as friendly a manner as possible that his behaviour was discreditable.

The end was tragedy. Whether Gugsä was already involved in treachery with the Italians and thus, fancying himself secure against the wrath of the Emperor, was anxious to be rid of his young wife, or whether there was nothing deliberate in his conduct, which was merely indifference to suffering so often displayed by the untutored mind, it is impossible to say. Tigre is remote from Addis Ababa and the communications, as we have seen, are extremely poor. What happened in Gugsä's household can only be guessed. One fact is certain. The princess, when far advanced in childbirth, was subjected to shameful neglect, and with her heart almost broken by her husband's contempt, could not rally her delicate frame to face the coming ordeal. After a long silence news was brought to the Emperor that his daughter's life was despaired of, and that nothing, it seemed, was being done to save her.

The Emperor, agonised by these terrible tidings of the daughter whom he loved so well, did not delay a moment but despatched his private physician, a Greek in whom he had the greatest confidence, who went by aeroplane to Tigre, taking with him every possible equipment which might be needed. The doctor arrived too late. It was the dead body of the princess which he brought back in the Emperor's plane.

When it was known that the aeroplane had landed the Emperor left his palace to meet the tragic procession which bore his child back to her father's home. He did not speak—but motioning his servants to stand aside, knelt beside the frail body, finally throwing himself upon it in tempestuous grief.

The burial took place at Addis Ababa, a circumstance which was interpreted throughout the country as marking the extreme displeasure of the Emperor, for it was unheard of in Ethiopia that a wife should be buried away

from her husband's home. The place of her burial is still frequently visited both by the Emperor and Empress who kneel and pray beside it. They never forgave Gugsä; but little thought that they would one day see him add the blackest treachery to his other crimes.

Haile Selassie Gugsä was allowed to retain his governorship, of which, indeed, it might have been very difficult to have deprived him. But it was clear that the Emperor no longer thought of him as worthy of great trust. The fact that Ras Seyoum was more frequently consulted than he was when decisions were taken was a source of great humiliation to Gugsä, and when in the general mobilisation to meet the Italian advance, he was not given an independent command but was actually placed under Ras Seyoum's authority, his cup was full. Already overtures had been made to him by the Italians—it is possible in fact that they dated back for several years—since as ruler of the eastern province of Tigre he was naturally easily accessible to Italian propaganda.

What is his position now? Whether he has been promised the imperial throne it is difficult to judge; but one thing is clear. If Gugsä is on the side of the Italians Ras Seyoum will fight them to the last drop of his blood. The hereditary rivalry will be fanned to white heat by this treachery, which may prove in the end a stimulus to the Emperor's cause.

Haile Selassie Gugsä in the ranks of his country's enemies is a pitiable figure. Mirrors, scents, and razors were, we are told, among the gifts with which he was presented by his new-found friends. This is an index to character. The Italians may represent him as an enlightened chieftain who has accepted the march of progress with open arms. In view of his past record this fanciful portrait of the renegade can hardly appear very convincing to the outside world. Whatever the immediate future, it is safe to predict that Gugsä's fate will be an unhappy one. In their efforts to break the allegiance of the chieftains it is known that the Italians



have been offering the throne to all and sundry. In the almost inconceivable event of an Italian victory they will find themselves saddled with so many promises that they will probably achieve impartiality by the simple process of keeping none of them. Haile Selassie Gugsä struts in triumph for the moment and doubtless his mirrors, his scents and his razors have all the thrill of pretty toys to a vain and spoiled child; but it is probable that he will experience a bitter awakening before long.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### WHERE ARE THEY TENDING?

THE tale ends with a question mark, a much bigger note of interrogation than most Europeans realise. For it is not merely the question of whether Ethiopia and its gallant king will survive. Far more is at stake than that. The course of this war may determine whether or not all Europe is to return to the jungle.

So far the Italians are checked. The Emperor has kept iron control upon his men and serious engagements have been few. It has been left for the deserts and the mountains and the rains to hold up the Italian advance though the Ethiopians have fought with fine courage on occasion.

Meanwhile the question of sanctions is argued in Europe, postponements and evasions playing a large part in that argument. But it is not to the political manœuvrings that the eyes of most of us must turn but to the desolate regions where two bodies of men are being driven by fate to a death grapple, where the youth of Italy in their misguided enthusiasm are marching to horrible death and where the flower of Ethiopia are doomed to perish in defence of their country.

It is for the European to realise what is happening in the hills and to say that it must cease,—not for the sake of Ethiopia nor for the sake of Italy, but because the high destiny of humanity is outraged by so blind and so useless and so terrible a struggle.

The conscience of civilisation must say to the attacker "You are making civilisation ridiculous, you are insulting the intelligence of the human race by claiming that the benefits of civilisation can be spread in such a manner. . . ."

But where is the conscience of civilisation? The answer must surely be that it is now in the keeping of the English-speaking peoples. A sure word from them, clear and unequivocal, can rally all the scattered decency of humanity to demand that the war shall stop.

And if this war is stopped surely it will be easier to stop the next war that threatens?

If by allowing Ethiopia to perish civilisation might be saved statesmen might well let events take their course. But it is clear that if Ethiopia goes down fighting and the powers who pledged her integrity make no sincere move to aid her, then not just one scrap of paper is torn in pieces but every agreement between nations becomes in one moment void.

The war has dragged. The papers that hoped for sensations have relegated news from the front to the less important pages. Newspaper readers are bored with the war, we are told. It is a dangerous boredom, for if it permits the League to betray Ethiopia civilisation may suffer its last betrayal.

The armies of two nations march amid the rocks of Abyssinia. But this war is more than that.

See in the rocks of the world  
Marches the host of mankind  
A feeble wavering line.  
Where are they tending . . . ?

Haile Selassie has surely been called to a strange destiny. The ruler of a small, distant, and backward people, he has suddenly become in his desperate struggle a symbol of civilisation with its back to the wall.

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